

**The Representation of Jewish Women in Pre-Revolutionary Russian Literature**

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## **Declaration**

I, Christopher John Tooke, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

*Christopher John Tooke, 7 September 2011*

## Abstract

This thesis analyses the representation of Jewish women in pre-revolutionary Russian literature, focusing on the period 1881–1907. It argues that Jewish women, far from universally marginalized, played a central role in works by a number of Russian writers, embodying and challenging not only stereotypes but also a variety of ideological viewpoints on key socio-political questions in late tsarist Russia. The ambiguous identity of Jewish women, portrayed as outsiders and yet also often as to some degree amenable, rendered them ideal figures through which to explore and test national and gender identities, and tolerance, in the Russian Empire.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One considers how two major Russian writers, Chekhov and Kuprin, both reproduce and problematize stereotypes relating to Jewish women and Jews as a whole in their construction of the ‘Jewish feminine’. Chapter Two reveals how two writers from opposite ends of the political spectrum, the conservative antisemite Vsevolod Krestovskii and the liberal progressive Evgenii Chirikov, use narratives of Jewish female assimilation into Russian society to condemn the social and political status quo. Chapter Three examines the representation of the ‘demonic’ Jewess in novels concerning an alleged Jewish plot for world domination by two antisemitic writers, Nikolai Vagner and Vera Kryzhanovskaia. Chapter Four analyses the depiction of revolutionary Jewish women in works by two Russian-Jewish writers, David Aizman and Semen An-skii.

Whether they portray Jewish women as striving for a just society or for its downfall, the texts use the figure of the Jewess to criticize late tsarist society. Indeed, this thesis concludes that the works, despite the prominence within them of Jewish women, are often less concerned with Jews and Jewesses as such than with the socio-political debates to which they contribute, particularly the question of Russian national identity and character.

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### **Note on references and transliteration**

This thesis largely follows the MHRA style guide. Full details of sources are given at first citation. Thereafter, they are generally referred to by the author's name only, apart from where more than one work by the same author is used, in which case short titles are given. On occasion, where there is a large gap between the first and subsequent references I supply additional details in order to aid the reader.

Transliteration of Russian follows the Library of Congress system.

## Introduction

This thesis analyses the representation of Jewish women in pre-revolutionary Russian literature, focusing on the period 1881–1907. It aims to identify and categorize the primary characteristics and tropes pertaining to the portrayal of the Jewess. A further aim is to examine how these portrayals helped to articulate and contest versions of Russian and Jewish national identity, and how they relate to socio-political discourse on the status of Jews and women and on Russia's present and future. The thesis argues that in the late tsarist period Russian-language writers increasingly gave Jewish women a voice and an active role in their works. Writers often situated Jewish women at the forefront of political and social developments in the Empire, where they came to represent at once a distinct minority defined by and often attached to their nation and an element in society pursuing universalist ideals. Yet in a number of texts the Jewess represented a powerful force undermining Russian morality and national solidarity in order to pursue a Jewish conspiracy for world domination. Jewish women therefore became central to how a variety of texts contributed to the most burning socio-political debates of the late tsarist period.

### Primary Literature

A detailed examination of representations of Jewish women in Russian literature is conspicuously absent among the studies of this phenomenon in major European literatures, and the present study remedies this oversight. This dissertation is the first detailed analysis in any language of the image of the Jewess in pre-revolutionary Russian literature. Although the number of works from the period with Jewish male or female characters is far lower than in English, French or German literature, I do not attempt an exhaustive study of the topic. Rather, the texts selected for detailed examination in this thesis constitute in various senses the most prominent representations of the Jewess during the period. Since one of the principal concerns of this study is how representations of Jewish women relate to social matters, it concentrates on the genres that tend to engage with such issues most directly, prose and drama. Since it is concerned with depictions of contemporary Jewesses, it does not examine the large field of biblically themed literature.

I examine a broad range of writers. Chapter One deals with the major figures of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860–1904) and Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin (1870–1938), analysing Chekhov's short story 'Tina' (1886) and Kuprin's short story 'Zhidovka'

(1904). The other three chapters cover little-known writers. Chapter Two focuses on the conservative antisemite Vsevolod Vladimirovich Krestovskii's (1839–1895) trilogy *Zhid idet* (1888–91) and the liberal writer Evgenii Nikolaevich Chirikov's (1864–1932) play *Evrei* (1904). Chapter Three examines novels by two antisemitic writers, Nikolai Petrovich Vagner's (1829–1907) *Temnyi put'* (1890) and Vera Ivanovna Kryzhanovskaia's (1857–1924) *Mertvaya petlia* (1906). Since a fuller picture also involves representations of the Jewess in works in Russian by Jewish writers, in the fourth chapter I analyse texts by two such writers: Semen Akimovich An-skii (real name: Shloime Zeinvil Rapoport, 1863–1920) and David Iakovlevich Aizman (1869–1922). This both amplifies the coverage of the topic and provides a comparative and complementary perspective. This thesis seeks to analyse the image of the Jewess from the point of view of male writers; consequently, all but one of the writers, Kryzhanovskaia, are male. Although this thesis provides a frame of reference for future studies analysing its themes in female writers' works, there are few such works in the pre-revolutionary period.<sup>1</sup>

My study establishes the broad patterns in depictions of Jewish women in pre-revolutionary Russian literature. However, the detailed case studies focus on works that do not merely reproduce common stereotypes relating to Jewish women, but deviate from or in certain ways problematize or exaggerate some of the stereotypes relating to Jewish women. Aspects of these representations are nevertheless paradigmatic of many other representations of Jewish women, which are also referred to for comparison and for the benefit of further scholarly investigation. The texts show the great flexibility of the figure of the Jewess, and of the various characteristics and phenomena with which she is associated such as beauty, victimhood and self-sacrificing devotion. I focus on works that put the Jewess in the spotlight: all the texts feature a Jewess as the major or one of the major characters. The material that I examine represents the full range of

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<sup>1</sup> T. L. Shechepkina-Kupernik (1874–1952) published a sympathetic poem about the plight of Jewish women, 'Evreike', in the philosemitic anthology *Shchit* (1915): Shechepkina-Kupernik, 'Evreike', in *Shchit. Literaturnyi sbornik*, ed. by L. Andreev, M. Gor'kii and F. Sologub (Moscow, 1915), p. 187. For a study of one of the very few Jewish female writers in the Russian Empire writing in Russian, R. M. Khin (1861–1928), see Carol B. Balin, *To Reveal Our Hearts: Jewish Women Writers in Tsarist Russia* (Cincinnati, 2000), pp. 97–101. See also Amelia Glaser, 'The Merchant at the Threshold: Rashel Khin, Osip Mandelshtam, and the Poetics of Apostasy', in *Modern Jewish Literatures: Intersections and Boundaries*, ed. by Sheila E. Jelen, Michael P. Kramer and L. Scott Lerner (Pennsylvania, 2011), pp. 66–82. Mondry analyses Jewish female self-fashioning in the work of an interesting contemporary Russian-language Jewish woman writer living in Israel, Dina Rubina (b. 1953), in Henrietta Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies: Constructing the Jew in Russian Culture since the 1880s* (Boston, MA, 2009), pp. 188–207.

ideological positions of the late tsarist era. The writers relate their portrayals to socio-political debates, often espousing controversial viewpoints. There is both an external, historical reason for the decision to focus on the period from 1881 to 1907 and an internal, literary one. The period from 1881 to 1907, which began and ended with horrendous anti-Jewish violence, brought a series of tumultuous events and changes to Russian Jewry. It also saw the increased prominence of Jewish women in the public eye, as they became more socially and politically active, as well as gaining attention as victims of anti-Jewish violence. From the literary point of view, this period was particularly fruitful for the creation of texts about male and female Jews. Generally, the portrayals of women became more complicated and nuanced compared to earlier in the nineteenth century. While the richest period is from 1881–1907, works from before this period and from the last ten years of the Empire are also included in the analysis.

### **Historical Context**

Livak traces the formation of Russian perceptions of Jews back to Kievan Rus's adoption of Christianity in 988, but notes the importance of the influence of the Western literary depiction of Jews on secular Russian literature's portrayals.<sup>2</sup> Even after the Russian Empire acquired a significant Jewish population of some 300,000 upon its acquisition of land formerly belonging to Poland at the end of the eighteenth century,<sup>3</sup> the Russian imagination continued to rely principally on folklore, theology and Western literature. The restriction of Jewish residence and movement to the Russian provinces acquired from Poland and to New Russia meant that until the late nineteenth century the people of the Russian heartland saw few Jews.<sup>4</sup> Klier asserts that, as further discriminatory legislation was promulgated throughout the nineteenth century, the restrictions on residence to what in 1835 received the title 'Pale of Settlement' became the most important cause of Jewish poverty.<sup>5</sup> Although restrictions were periodically removed and restored for certain groups of people, it remained one of the principal obstacles to full Jewish integration right up until its abolition with the demise of the Empire in 1917. Most leading recent scholars see Catherine's and Nicholas I's meddling in Jewish life as largely driven by the need to integrate the Empire's subjects and

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<sup>2</sup> Leonid Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford, 2010), pp. 14–15.

<sup>3</sup> John Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews* (hereafter Klier, *RGHJ*) (DeKalb, IL, 1986), p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

modernize the state, not by hostility towards Jews.<sup>6</sup> Upon gaining the new Jewish subjects, Catherine the Great (r. 1762–96) attempted to incorporate them into the Russian social hierarchy.<sup>7</sup> The Russian state tended to view Jews as either urban merchants who had a fairly stable existence and sometimes owned property, or townspeople who scraped by running inns or working on large estates.<sup>8</sup> Although many Jews in reality did not fit into these categories,<sup>9</sup> the fact that writers' views of Jews reflected the state's points to their reliance on stereotypes and official views rather than personal experience or investigation.<sup>10</sup>

Livak characterizes the unique position of Russian Jews and Russians' perceptions of them thus:

The Russian empire was the only modern European state whose treatment of Jews drew explicitly on the precepts of Christian anti-Judaism. Russia became the staging ground for a clash of medieval religious attitudes and modern Western thought, from the Enlightenment ideal of acculturation to racial science to antisemitic ideology.<sup>11</sup>

The state policy of tsarist Russia towards Jews reflected the perceived need to curb Jewish tendencies to exploit.<sup>12</sup> Jews were also seen as religious fanatics who believed in their superiority to Gentiles and were hostile to their fellow subjects in the Empire, as well as to the state itself.<sup>13</sup> Jewish communities in the Empire were indeed isolated, possessing a large degree of autonomy. Each community was governed by a board known as the *kahal*, charged with, among other functions, collecting Jewish taxes and

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to Klier, see also Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia, 1983); Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); and Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, 3 vols (Oxford and Portland, OR, 2010–12).

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Nathans, 'The Jews', in *The Cambridge History of Russia*, ed. by Maureen Perrie, Dominic Lieven and Ronald Grigor Suny, 3 vols (Cambridge, 2006), II: *Imperial Russia, 1689–1917*, ed. by Dominic Lieven, pp. 184–201 (p. 187).

<sup>8</sup> John D. Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question 1855–1881* (hereafter Klier, *IRJQ*) (Cambridge, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Klier, *RGHJ*, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, B. Gorev, 'Russian Literature and the Jews', trans. by Arthur Levin, in V. Lvov-Rogachevsky, *A History of Russian-Jewish Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1979), pp. 13–31 (p. 16).

<sup>11</sup> Livak, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Klier, *IRJQ*, p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

communicating with the tsarist authorities.<sup>14</sup> Although the *kahal* was officially abolished in 1844, antisemites continued to claim that it still existed and exerted control over the community and threatened state control through its excessive powers. They even went so far as to assert that it constituted part of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy for domination of the world.<sup>15</sup>

Alexander II (r. 1855–81) facilitated the entry of a small number of Russian Jews into Russian society and culture, undertaking measures to reward with freedom of residence and other privileges those Jews who attempted to integrate into the Russian population, and who acted in accordance with the wishes of the state, for example, by proving themselves economically useful subjects.<sup>16</sup> Nathans terms this policy ‘selective integration’.<sup>17</sup> For example, in 1859, the government equalized the rights and privileges of Jewish merchants of the first guild with those of their Christian counterparts, permitting them residence with their families and employees in the Russian heartland. Another major concession occurred in 1879, when it was declared that Jewish graduates of all Russian post-secondary educational institutions would enjoy the right of residence outside the Pale.<sup>18</sup>

Prominent among those responding to Alexander’s gestures were followers of the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*), a movement that had emerged in Berlin and that spread in the early nineteenth century to outposts in the Russian Empire such as Odessa, Riga, Shklov and Vilna. The *Haskalah* sought to reform Jewish life and erase barriers between the Jewish community and the surrounding Gentile population, for example, by ridding the community of superstitions without diluting its Jewish identity, raising the status of Hebrew to that of a language of modern culture, equipping Jews with fluency in major European languages such as German and Russian, and encouraging engagement in more productive labour (notably agriculture) than that traditionally pursued by Jews.<sup>19</sup> The *Haskalah* was directly opposed to another recent threat to the traditional ways and power structure of the Jewish community, Hasidism, a mystical-pietist movement.<sup>20</sup> The clash between traditional religious Jews and secular Jews oriented towards integration into Russian society and the transformation of Jewish modes of life characterizes the period examined in this dissertation.

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<sup>14</sup> Nathans, ‘The Jews’, p. 188.

<sup>15</sup> Klier, *IRJQ*, p. 417.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 29. Nathans, ‘The Jews’, pp. 193–95.

<sup>17</sup> Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Nathans, ‘The Jews’, p. 194.

<sup>19</sup> ibid., p. 189.

<sup>20</sup> ibid., p. 188.

Jews became increasingly prominent in many spheres of Russian life in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result both of Alexander II's reforms and of internal changes. By the end of the century, they were Russia's largest non-Slavonic and non-Christian ethnic group and constituted the largest Jewish population in the world. The Jewish presence was particularly evident in cities: half the Jewish population resided in urban areas (compared to 16% of ethnic Russians).<sup>21</sup> Apart from constituting 15% of university students in the Empire, they were also prominent in banking and finance, journalism and law.<sup>22</sup> In the 1870s some educated, assimilated Jews began to act directly against the state's interests by becoming involved in revolutionary movements.<sup>23</sup>

Jews' professional success, combined with their disproportionately high membership of radical groups, met with particular resentment in the 1870s, when the Jewish question began to grow in insistence.<sup>24</sup> The parvenus appeared when the Empire was suffering social and economic problems following the Great Reforms, among them the emancipation of the serfs. Ethnic Russians expressed doubt at Jewish efforts to merge with the Gentile population, and accused Jews of putting Russians at a disadvantage in their own country and of exerting a harmful influence on the Empire's modernizing economy.<sup>25</sup> Another factor was the rise of the national question, prompted and guided in particular by the 1863 Polish uprising and the 1877–78 Russo-Turkish war.<sup>26</sup> During this period antisemitism became central to the new Russian conservatism.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, when pogroms broke out in the Pale of Settlement in 1881–82 after Alexander II's assassination, many Russian politicians, journalists and intellectuals blamed not only the low cultural level of much of society, but also the Jews themselves, at whom they directed the traditional accusations of economic exploitation and religious hostility.<sup>28</sup> Scholars have partly attributed the outbreak of pogroms in the Pale of Settlement in 1881–82 to popular anger, fanned by the press, at Jewish

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>23</sup> Naomi Shepherd, *A Price Below Rubies: Jewish Women as Rebels and Radicals* (London, 1993), p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Brass defines the 'Jewish question' as 'a discourse [in nineteenth-century Europe] in which discussion revolved around opposite sides of the position that various social, economic, and political problems of European societies should be somehow attributed to the presence and activities of Jews'. See Paul R. Brass, 'Introduction: Discourses of Ethnicity, Communalism, and Violence', in *Riots and Pogroms*, ed. by Brass (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 1–55 (p. 8).

<sup>25</sup> Klier, *IRJQ*, p. xviii and pp. 370–83. Nathans, 'The Jews', p. 197.

<sup>26</sup> Klier, *IRJQ*, p. xviii and pp. 390–95.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 384–416.

<sup>28</sup> Brass, p. 3. See also Klier's study dedicated to the pogroms: John Doyle Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881–1882* (hereafter Klier, *RJP*) (Cambridge, 2011).

participation in the regicide, sentiments that developed from the conviction that Jews were exploitative and anti-Christian.<sup>29</sup> As concepts of Russian nationhood developed during the nineteenth century, Jews were identified not only as aliens irredeemable by conversion, but also as directly threatening the Russian nation.<sup>30</sup> Racial antisemitism took root during this period, which in turn gave impetus to occult forms of antisemitism and the belief in Jewish plans for world domination.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, a small number of more liberal-minded Russians reacted against this popular hostility towards and the state restrictions against Jews; this movement against the grain became especially pronounced in the revolutionary fervour of the early twentieth century.

Frankel argues that the pogroms of 1881–82 and the restrictions and subsequent discrimination created among Jews the perception of a ‘Russian-Jewish crisis’. Jewish emigration from the Empire increased significantly, and the idea of a mass exodus acquired renewed urgency.<sup>32</sup> The events galvanized more Jews into political activism and were central to the gestation of modern Jewish ideologies and movements such as Zionism and Jewish forms of socialism.<sup>33</sup> If in the preceding period there had been a growing consensus among the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia that Jews should assimilate, the subsequent period was marked by ambiguity with regard to the question of assimilation, and doubt that it was even desirable. Klier remarks that the pogroms ushered in a period of crisis not only for the Jewish community, but also for the Russian Empire itself, since the two years of riots in a strategic region of the Empire threatened the national economy and placed doubt on the authorities’ capacity to maintain stability, law and order.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, the pogroms forced the government to face the fact that its attempts to integrate Jews into Russian society had failed.<sup>35</sup> It reacted to the turmoil and the

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<sup>29</sup> See Michael I. Aronson, *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia* (Pittsburgh, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Orbach, ‘Nineteenth-Century Russian Antisemitism’, in *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*, ed. by Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz (New York and London, 1991), pp. 188–211 (p. 207).

<sup>31</sup> For a study of the literary background to this phenomenon, see S. Iu. Dudakov, *Istoriia odnogo mifa: Ocherki russkoi literatury XIX–XX vv.* (hereafter Dudakov, *IOM*) (Moscow, 1993).

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> John D. Klier, ‘Russian Jewry on the Eve of the Pogroms’, in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, ed. by Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 3–12 (p. 3).

<sup>34</sup> Klier, *RJP*, p. xiii.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

general increasing resentment against Jews by increasing restrictions on them.<sup>36</sup> The state's policy towards Jews differed sharply from the relative liberalism and attempts at integration of the preceding period as it pursued flagrant discrimination and oppression for the remainder of the tsarist period. For example, in the early years of Alexander III's reign, commissions were established to reduce 'Jewish harm' and quotas were introduced on the numbers of Jews in Russian educational institutions.<sup>37</sup>

Literature from the period 1881–1917 reflects and contributes to the intensified, increasingly polarized debate on the Jewish question, and traces its interaction with such issues as the national question, women's emancipation and the future of Russia. Indeed, Dudakov in his study *Istoriia odnogo mifa* (1993) asserts that the success of *Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov* (1903) in propagandizing in Russia the myth of the Jewish conspiracy to take over the world can largely be attributed to its initial proclamation in *belles-lettres*.<sup>38</sup> Dudakov's research therefore shows the need to investigate representations of Jews, male and female, in Russian literature not only as a reflection of Russian views of Jews, but also as one of the most important and formative influences on these views.

The second and far more murderous wave of pogroms around the time of the 1905 Revolution inaugurated a second crisis period for Russian Jews. Jewish radical and liberal students were angered by the inadequate response to the pogroms of their Russian counterparts, who were reluctant to condemn the Russian masses despite their professed sympathy to the Jewish cause and their denunciation of antisemitism by the authorities and by conservatives.<sup>39</sup> During some of the pogroms, Jewish self-defence groups fought back, often exacerbating bloodshed but occasionally resulting in what can only be termed Jewish victories over their Christian attackers.<sup>40</sup> No longer could Jews be rejected as passive victims. Moreover, many Jews were active participants in the 1905–07 revolution, during which movements combining revolutionary socialism and Jewish nationalism reached full development.<sup>41</sup> Jews' participation provoked further right-wing anger against them, and the pogroms of 1905–06 differed from earlier ones in being politically motivated. Orbach describes them as 'part of the effort to defeat the coalition of workers, peasants, conscience-stricken gentry, urban *intelligentsy* and

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<sup>36</sup> Aronson, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 261.

<sup>38</sup> Dudakov, *IOM*, p. 175.

<sup>39</sup> Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 293.

<sup>40</sup> Edward H. Judge, *Easter in Kishinev: Anatomy of a Pogrom* (New York and London, 1992), p. 105.

<sup>41</sup> Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, p. 133.

national minority groups who had come together in a loose alliance to contest the legitimacy of absolute tsarist power over the Empire'.<sup>42</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, Jewish women became a part of the Jewish question in ways that were not possible when they tended to be viewed as outside the public sphere and merely fulfilling traditional roles. They became prominent in the public eye, as their visibility in revolutionary movements and higher education increased. A key date in Jewish women's rise to prominence is 1881, when Gesia Gel'fman of *Narodnaia volia* participated in the assassination of the tsar. Jewish women now had to be seen as involved in the Jewish activity that many Russians linked with the political problems of the country. While supporters of revolutionary movements could welcome into the fold a major marginalized group, their opponents had a new enemy to despise and stereotype. Jewish women who converted to Christianity provided hope for Russian Christians of various ideological positions. Russian writers became less reliant on imitation of Western models for their Jewish female characters: even if the writers did not know any Jewish women well themselves, sufficient real-life stories, anecdotes, myths and stereotypes relating to the Jewish women of Russia were circulating in Russian society and culture for writers to construct Jewish female characters based on what was conceived as Russian reality. Writers' previous largely idealized and often overwhelmingly positive conceptions of Jewish women had to alter to accommodate a far greater complexity and diversity. Specifically, writers had to rid themselves of the common notion that it was only male Jews who could be inclined to harm Russian state or national interests – a task facilitated by the growth in racial antisemitism, which saw negative Jewish 'traits' as inherent to all Jews regardless of religious affiliation, sex or professed political affiliation.

It should be borne in mind that most of the Jewish female characters examined in this dissertation do not correspond to what was still a majority within the Jewish community of the Russian Empire. Most Jewish women in the Pale of Settlement maintained their traditional religious and economic roles in the family, and often were the upholders, not the breakers, of tradition, resisting other family members' assimilation and modernization.<sup>43</sup> Gendered social norms played a role by protecting

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<sup>42</sup> Orbach, p. 195. See also Chapters Three and Four of this thesis.

<sup>43</sup> Paula E. Hyman, 'Two Models of Modernization: Jewish Women in the German and the Russian Empires', in *Jews and Gender: The Challenge to Hierarchy (Studies in Contemporary Jewry: An Annual: XVI)*, ed. by Jonathan Frankel (Oxford, 2000), pp. 39–53 (p. 45).

women from the seductive trends of modernization and secularization.<sup>44</sup> However, the weakening of the patriarchal system, a process which began in the mid-eighteenth century, accelerated in the nineteenth century, as reflected in soaring divorce rates and women running away from home in order to undergo baptism.<sup>45</sup> Although Jewish women in eastern Europe assimilated more slowly and in smaller numbers than in Western Europe, various socioeconomic and cultural factors put them in a position of greater influence on the process of assimilation than their western sisters.<sup>46</sup> In various respects, many Jewish women were more inclined and better able to assimilate into late tsarist Russian society than Jewish men. When Jewish women actually did break free from the constraints of their community and receive a secular education, they were probably more likely than their menfolk to adopt and follow modern ideas, among them radicalism.<sup>47</sup> Parush asserts that Jewish women were 'the weakest link in traditional society and, therefore, the most likely point for breaching its wall of separatism'.<sup>48</sup>

Data on conversions, one overt potential indication of assimilation or at least at attempts to assimilate, are incomplete and do not overall give a definite impression that more Jewish women than Jewish men underwent conversion in the Russian Empire. Rather, the proportions vary according to the period and, not surprisingly given the diversity of the Pale of Settlement, the place.<sup>49</sup> For the purposes of this study, however, the most important aspects of the question are the reasons for conversion and the socio-cultural context. Most Jews in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, including in the Russian Empire, converted to Christianity for pragmatic reasons, although this was more prevalent among male than female converts.<sup>50</sup> Between the 1860s and 1890s the number of Jewish converts to Orthodoxy in the Russian Empire

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<sup>44</sup> Todd M. Endelman, 'Gender and Conversion Revisited', in *Gender and Jewish History*, ed. by Marion A. Kaplan and Deborah Dash Moore (Bloomington, IN, 2011), pp. 170–86 (p. 184).

<sup>45</sup> On trends in Jewish divorce, see ChaeRan Y. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (Hanover, NH, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Seattle, WA, 1995), p. 71.

<sup>47</sup> Hyman, 'Two Models of Modernization', pp. 47–48.

<sup>48</sup> Iris Parush, 'Women Readers as Agents of Social Change among Eastern European Jews in the Late Nineteenth Century', in *Gender & History*, 9.1 (1997), 60–82 (p. 66).

<sup>49</sup> For a summary of some of the scholarship, see Endelman, 'Gender and Conversion Revisited'.

<sup>50</sup> See Michael Stanislawski, 'Jewish Apostasy in Russia: A Tentative Typology', in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, ed. by Todd M. Endelman (New York, 1987), pp. 189–205 (p. 198), and ChaeRan Freeze, 'When Chava Left Home: Gender, Conversion, and the Jewish Family in Tsarist Russia', *Polin*, 18 (2005), 153–88 (pp. 156–57).

more than doubled.<sup>51</sup> Safran ascribes the huge increase in conversions in Russia towards the end of the nineteenth century to Jews' wish to circumvent the repressive legislation of the 1880s and 1890s, for example, the quotas on the numbers of Jewish students in higher education.<sup>52</sup>

Social breakdown and poverty encouraged some women from lower social-economic backgrounds (who typically lacked dowries) to convert in order to find a Christian to marry and escape destitution.<sup>53</sup> The picture is more complicated with middle-class Jewish women. Religious education was considered essential for Jewish men, but unnecessary or even undesirable for Jewish women.<sup>54</sup> Girls were often left at home alone while their brothers were taken to *heders*, as a result of which Jewish girls often experienced parental neglect or even abuse and felt less attached to their community than did Jewish boys, making them more likely to seek the companionship of Christians.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, many Jewish women had more opportunities and were more willing to interact with non-Jewish Russians and to become better integrated socially and culturally than many Jewish males.<sup>56</sup> Freeze identifies the combination of a sense of isolation from their community and a sense of closeness with the Russian-Christian community as one of the major reasons that Jewish girls gave for their conversion to Christianity in personal statements, although she accepts that many girls and their supporters may have exaggerated these factors in order to bolster their cases for conversion.<sup>57</sup>

Many Jewish women craved educational opportunities and were voracious readers. They were more likely than Jewish men to have a Russian education, rather than a traditional Jewish religious one.<sup>58</sup> While men were forced to read rabbinic texts, women, who were typically excluded from reading such texts, gravitated towards European texts of various kinds that were forbidden or of no interest to men.<sup>59</sup> Through their reading of European, including Russian, literature, middle-class Jewish women, even if they did not convert, began to acquire and spread in their households values that threatened the social fabric of Jewish society, such as the idea of romantic love, which

<sup>51</sup> Gabriella Safran, *Rewriting the Jew: Assimilation Narratives in the Russian Empire* (Stanford, 2000), p. 8. Henceforth, except where otherwise indicated, all further references to Safran will be to this work.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Endelman, 'Gender and Conversion Revisited', p. 182.

<sup>54</sup> Parush, p. 65.

<sup>55</sup> Freeze, 'When Chava Left Home', pp. 156–57.

<sup>56</sup> Parush, p. 72.

<sup>57</sup> Freeze, 'When Chava Left Home', p. 170.

<sup>58</sup> Parush, p. 65.

<sup>59</sup> Endelman, 'Gender and Conversion Revisited', p. 181.

ran counter to the tradition of arranged marriages.<sup>60</sup> At one extreme, Jewish women's reading of Russian literature attracted them towards proto-feminist and revolutionary ideas.<sup>61</sup> Only middle-class families could afford such an education for their daughters, so such women formed a minority of the already small number of female converts. All the same, it is the middle-class Jewish female converts who are most prominently represented in the literature of the period, for example, as 'well-dressed, poetry-declaiming, novel-reading, piano-playing daughters of traditional, even Hasidic, parents'.<sup>62</sup>

Another salient feature of the Jewish community in tsarist Russia was that, due to the importance of male religious learning, women tended to be the principal breadwinners, and therefore both economic capacity and domestic skills were valued in wives and mothers.<sup>63</sup> Many Jewish women therefore enjoyed an independence and a degree of social interaction unavailable to non-Jewish bourgeois women.<sup>64</sup> Work patterns and experience of taking initiative were therefore other factors facilitating Jewish women's assimilation. The weakening of the patriarchal system also brought with it an unsavoury trend, however: the rise of prostitution.<sup>65</sup>

Jewish women's particular backgrounds and qualities also facilitated their work within revolutionary movements. Jewish women had a far higher average literacy rate than Russian women, which facilitated their exposure to revolutionary literature.<sup>66</sup> While Jewish working women had the status of the main breadwinners in families, Russian female workers, who were often of peasant stock, came from a tradition of total legal, social and economic subordination to their menfolk.<sup>67</sup> In the earliest radical movements, both terrorist and peaceful, Jewish women formed the second-largest ethnic group after Russian women.<sup>68</sup> Between 1902 and 1911, while Russians accounted for about half of SR female terrorists, Ukrainians made up 9%, and Jewesses constituted 30%,<sup>69</sup> yet the proportion of Jewish males was small.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Jewish female workers were far more prevalent in the Jewish Marxist party, the Bund (founded in

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>61</sup> Parush, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> Endelman, p. 182.

<sup>63</sup> Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia*, p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, pp. 67–69.

<sup>65</sup> Polonsky, II: 1881 to 1914, p. 365–66. See also Chapter One of this thesis.

<sup>66</sup> Shepherd, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Amy Knight, 'Female Terrorists in the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party', *Russian Review*, 38 (1979), 139–59 (p. 145).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146. See also Chapter Four of this thesis.

1897), than female workers in the all-Russian labour movement because factory work traditionally undertaken by women dominated the Pale of Settlement.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century women in the Jewish working class constituted at least one-quarter of the labour force.<sup>72</sup> These Jewish girls suffered cruel exploitation and were lowest in the social hierarchy of traditional Jewish society.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, although Jewish women stood out as terrorists, they were arguably even more disproportionately represented within workers' movements. The Bund was particularly attractive to women because of its ethics of gender equality.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the founders of the Bund included both middle-class and working-class Jewish women, and several of the Bund's later leaders were women. Active participation did not preclude romantic relationships with, or even marriage to, male members.<sup>75</sup>

### **Jews in Russian Literature**

Russian and Western scholarship on Jews in Russian literature has flourished in the post-Soviet era. Scholarship on Jews in Russian literature is moving in similar directions to that on Jews in West European literature: away from examining Jews merely as individual characters and determining the degree to which they embody or refute stereotypes, to looking at how these stereotypes and other matters relating to Jewish characters in individual texts contribute to discussions on contemporary political and social issues relating to Jewry. Many studies have moved away from diachronic methodologies that look for broad patterns in treatments of Jews to focus on particular authors and particular themes.<sup>76</sup> For example, Katz and Rosenshield both focus on three major authors from a particular period (Gogol', Dostoevskii and Turgenev), all of whom established certain persistent stereotypes and trends in the portrayal of Jews.<sup>77</sup> Safran's *Rewriting the Jew: Assimilation Narratives in the Russian Empire* (2000)

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<sup>71</sup> Aleksandr Lokshin, 'The Bund in the Russian-Jewish Historical Landscape', in *Russia Under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion, 1894–1917*, ed. by Anna Geifman (Oxford, 1999), pp. 57–72 (pp. 62–63).

<sup>72</sup> Shepherd, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> Lokshin, pp. 62–63.

<sup>74</sup> Hyman, 'Two Models of Modernization', p. 48.

<sup>75</sup> Shepherd, pp. 7–8.

<sup>76</sup> Joshua Kunitz, *Russian Literature and the Jew: A Sociological Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Literary Patterns* (New York, 1929), is an example of the diachronic approach. His broad coverage of major and minor writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is useful, although he does little more than name many of the more obscure texts to which he refers, and his Marxist bias makes for unconvincing and rather tiresome reading.

<sup>77</sup> Elena Katz, *Neither with Them, Nor Without Them: The Russian Writer and the Jew in the Age of Realism* (New York, 2008). Gary Rosenshield, *The Ridiculous Jew: The Exploitation of a Stereotype in Gogol, Turgenev, and Dostoevsky* (Stanford, 2008).

studies literary examinations of Jewish assimilation in works by the Russian-Jewish writer G. I. Bogrov, the Polish writer Eliza Orzeszkowa, Leskov and Chekhov, analysing the writers and their works in their historical context. In his *Istoriia odnogo mifa*, Dudakov is arguably even more radical in his approach, using literary texts in an attempt to construct a picture of the background from which a non-literary text, *Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov* (essentially a translation of a collection of forged documents originating in France that the translator and compiler, Sergei Nilus, modified to reflect Russian conditions), emerged and was received. These studies to a greater extent than most studies from the Soviet period and before have attempted to draw out and analyse ambiguities in writers' and texts' attitudes towards Jews. They have resisted the temptation simplistically to categorize and periodize attitudes and representations, a common feature of scholarship on Jews in Russian literature in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>78</sup> Instead, they look at how representations adhere to or play on stereotypes, and how writers and texts invest their Jewish portraits with individual features. Moreover, Rosenshield argues that the more his authors draw on stereotypes, the more these stereotypes become unstable and the greater the range of interpretations to which the writers open their texts, ultimately risking undermining some of their main ideas.<sup>79</sup> These various new approaches have led to a more nuanced revision of standard opinions on texts.

Dreizin's study, *The Russian Soul and the Jew* (1990), identifies some of the stock types of male Jews in Russian literature, such as 'The Tradesman', 'The Clever One', 'The Rabbi' and 'The Family Man'.<sup>80</sup> Stereotypical characteristics of the male Jew include cowardice, greed, arrogance and vulgarity; even the positive trait of devotion to the family, in the rare instances where it is depicted, is offset by an exploitative attitude towards outsiders.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, the Jew is often more the object of mockery and contempt than of fear and hatred when he features in the works of classic Russian writers such as Gogol', Turgenev and Dostoevskii. Rosenshield posits that the physical representation of Jews that one finds in Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba* remained largely uniform throughout nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature: 'The male Jew is a thin, gaunt, weak, unprepossessing creature whose cowardly and womanish nature is perfectly in accord with his physical being.'<sup>82</sup> Rosenshield finds

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<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Kunitz.

<sup>79</sup> Rosenshield, pp. 3, 21–24.

<sup>80</sup> Felix Dreizin, *The Russian Soul and the Jew* (Lanham, MD, 1990).

<sup>81</sup> Dreizin, pp. 3–7.

<sup>82</sup> Rosenshield, p. 54.

that these three writers use the figure of the Jew in their works to define Russian heroes as possessing characteristics such as manliness, patriotism and compassion through highlighting the absence of the Jews' negative characteristics.<sup>83</sup> Rosenshield's study is exemplary for its treatment of stereotypes in relation to how writers use them to define attitudes towards cultural, social and political phenomena, such as Russian identity. However, writers of the period on which this thesis focuses did not tend to dismiss Jews as merely possessing the opposite characteristics to Russians. The Jewish threat was felt too strongly, and many writers began depicting Russians as inferior to Jews or possessing similar negative qualities. All the same, this reflects a continuation of the use of Jews to define Russians.

Vaiskopf's study 'Sem'ia bez uroda: Evreiskaia tema v russkoi kul'ture' (1997) demonstrates that few works of Russian Romantic literature of the 1820s–40s envisioned the possibility of brotherhood between Jews and other ethnic groups, perceiving only enmity as a result of Jewish nefariousness.<sup>84</sup> The characteristics attributed to Jews that Vaiskopf identifies during this period continued to define many of them later in the tsarist era. Apart from some of the features isolated by Dreizin, Vaiskopf finds Jewish belief in their chosenness, hatred of Christians, love of power and a consequent desire for ultimate world domination.

The idea of a Jewish plan to take over the world first appeared in Russian literature in the Romantic era, for example, in works by Bulgarin.<sup>85</sup> However, texts asserting the existence of such elaborate, destructive plans for world domination as *Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov* (1903) appeared as a result of developments in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Rosenshield finds that writers began portraying Jews as an economic and cultural threat to Russians and as threatening Russians with their subversiveness, accusations largely absent from earlier literature because Jews in the Empire had been kept isolated from Russians.<sup>86</sup> The rise of racial science also affected perceptions and portrayals of Jews. Mondry has found that, whereas before the 1880s Jews had tended to be depicted as merely an 'archetypal exotic and religious or class Other', literature of the late tsarist era, influenced by biological and racialist discourse, began additionally to view the Jew thus:

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 8, 107.

<sup>84</sup> Mikhail Vaiskopf, 'Sem'ia bez uroda: Evreiskaia tema v russkoi kul'ture', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 28 (1997), 76–99.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 80–81. See also Dudakov, *IOM*, and Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

<sup>86</sup> Rosenshield, pp. 6–7.

a biological Other whose acts, deeds and thoughts were determined by biological and racial differences. Both male and female Jews allegedly had definite and distinct physical and psychological characteristics which were genetically determined and which could not be changed by education, acculturation, conversion to Christianity, or change of social status.<sup>87</sup>

### **The Jewess in West European Literature**

Various studies of the portrayal of the Jewess in European culture have supported the idea that Jewish women before the late nineteenth century tended to be portrayed more positively than Jewish men.<sup>88</sup> All these studies refer to the phenomenon of the '*belle juive*': the figure of the Jewess conceived as both physically and spiritually beautiful, that is, both physically desirable and morally good, possessing a compassion and a capacity for self-sacrifice so great that they, together with her wish to leave the limits of Jewish life, make her inclined towards Christianity and romantic love for a Christian. Underlying this trope is the preconception of Judaism as an oppressive religion founded on xenophobia and characterized by a preoccupation with ritual observance, as opposed to the spiritual, universalist strivings of Christianity and the Jewess. In works featuring this trope, Judaism is typically embodied by the Jewess's father, who is usually a mean, cowardly exploiter despising and willing to betray the land in which he finds himself and its people.

The Jewess's devotion to Christianity points to the potential for all Jews to achieve salvation, but serves to distinguish male from female Jews because as a result she often becomes the victim of murder at the hands of her father. Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1592) is a classic example of this phenomenon, while in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1597) the father does not kill the Jewish daughter but does, for example, imply that she is less important than his material possessions, making both

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<sup>87</sup> Henrietta Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies: Constructing the Jew in Russian Culture since the 1880s* (Boston, MA, 2009), p. 18.

<sup>88</sup> General studies include Livia Bitton-Jackson, *Madonna or Courtesan? The Jewish Woman in Christian Literature* (New York, 1982), and Florian Krobb, 'La Belle Juive: Cunning in the Men and Beauty in the Women', *The Jewish Quarterly*, 147 (1992), 5–10. On English literature, see Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture* (Cambridge, 2007) (hereafter all references to Valman are to this work, except where otherwise stated) and idem, 'Bad Jew/Good Jewess', in *Philosemitism in History*, ed. by Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe (Cambridge, 2011) (hereafter Valman, 'Bad Jew/Good Jewess'), pp. 149–69; on French, see Luce A. Klein, *Portrait de la juive dans la littérature française* (Paris, 1970); on German: Florian Krobb, *Die schöne Jüdin. Jüdische Frauengestalten in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Tübingen, 1993); and on Polish: Bożena Umińska, *Postać z cieniem: portrety Żydówek w polskiej literaturze od końca XIX wieku do 1939 roku* (Warsaw, 2001).

plays, in Maccoby's words, 'Jew-baiting works'.<sup>89</sup> Bitton-Jackson concludes: 'As victim of ritual murder the Jewess bore visible witness not only to the truth of Christianity but, just as importantly, to the corruption of Judaism and its murderous intent.'<sup>90</sup> Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819) differs from both Marlowe's and Shakespeare's texts in that the Jewess does not betray her father for her Christian lover, maintaining loyalty to her faith, nation and family, and the father is not murderous. Although he is greedy and obstinate, his faults are partly attributed to centuries-long Christian persecution of Jews.

Klein follows Chateaubriand in speculating that this positive perception of the Jewess derives from the belief that, while Jewish males are cursed because they participated in the persecution of Christ, Jewish females have the divine gift of beauty because they treated Christ with compassion.<sup>91</sup> Jewish female beauty is therefore seen to reflect the Jewess's Christian soul, general amenability and potential for devoted love. Vaiskopf perceives in the attraction of the Jewess towards Christianity in European literature an allusion to the Virgin Mary and consequently a hint as to how Christianity could originate from within such a despised nation.<sup>92</sup> However, often in representations of Jewish women, saintly elements reminiscent of Mary are combined with elements suggesting carnality.<sup>93</sup>

Despite her amenability, in French and German literature the Jewess is typically presented as alien to the Gentile world. For example, Krobb finds that in German literature from the seventeenth century to the First World War the Jewess generally remains an eroticized 'Other' unable fully to assimilate into German society.<sup>94</sup> She is often presented either as a victim of sexualized subjugation and violence, or as a purely sensual demonic seductress.<sup>95</sup> Krobb goes so far as to term the representation of the Jewess in French and German Romantic literature 'a combination of erotic stimulus and pogrom'.<sup>96</sup> He thus finds corroboration of Sartre's oft-quoted statement on the allusions that have accrued around the Jewess in European culture:

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 90–91.

<sup>90</sup> Bitton-Jackson, p. 36.

<sup>91</sup> Klein, pp. 11–12.

<sup>92</sup> Vaiskopf, p. 84.

<sup>93</sup> Bitton-Jackson, pp. 72–73. See also Janis Bergman-Carton, 'Negotiating the Categories: Sarah Bernhardt and the Possibilities of Jewishness', *Art Journal*, 55 (1996), 55–64 (p. 56).

<sup>94</sup> See Krobb's conclusion, "Die Ewige Jüdin". Schluß', in *Die Schöne Jüdin*, pp. 249–59.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>96</sup> Florian Krobb, 'La belle Juive: Cunning in the Men and Beauty in the Women', *The Jewish Quarterly*, 147 (1992), 5–10 (p. 6).

Il y a dans les mots ‘une belle Juive’ une signification sexuelle très particulière et fort différente de celle qu’on trouvera par exemple dans ceux de ‘belle Roumaine’, ‘belle Grecque’ ou ‘belle Américaine’. C’est qu’ils ont comme un fumet de viol et de massacres. La belle Juive, c’est celle que les Cosaques du tsar traînent par les cheveux dans les rues de son village en flammes.<sup>97</sup>

Central to the conception of the *belle Juive* as a victim of sexual violence is antisemitism: it is this that provides the association with violence that is absent from the conception of other national or ethnic types of beautiful women. This sexual violence has been taken to indicate the desire to humiliate and dominate not only Jewish women, but also Jews as a whole.<sup>98</sup> However, sexual violence against Jews in literature does not, of course, necessarily indicate a desire to titillate the reader and provoke or satisfy a desire to subjugate Jews. In Chapter Two I show how Chirikov uses the association between sexual violence against Jewish women and antisemitism to condemn hostile attitudes towards Jews.

Valman finds a more nuanced depiction of the Jewess in nineteenth-century English literature. On the one hand, ‘the Jewess is an empty signifier unto which fantasies of desire or vengeance are arbitrarily projected’.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, her portrayal is not always tinged with violence because both Jewish women and Jews as a whole ‘were imagined as much in terms of desire and pity as fear and loathing’.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, for Valman the Jewess embodies the ambiguity of responses to Jews as a whole in England.<sup>101</sup> In many texts from nineteenth-century English literature, she serves to counter ‘figures of male Jews who are racially repellent, socially intrusive, or politically subversive’ by embodying the opposite qualities.<sup>102</sup> Valman finds that, while in French and German Romantic literature the Jewess functioned to delineate a fundamental dichotomy between the Western and the Semitic,<sup>103</sup> ‘in English literary culture the Jewess was idealized rather than exoticized, a model for rather than a foil to bourgeois femininity’.<sup>104</sup> The fact that English literature represents one extreme in the portrayal of the alterity of the Jewess makes for interesting comparison with the Russian case, given

<sup>97</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Paris, 1954), pp. 58–59.

<sup>98</sup> See Carol Ockman, ‘Two Large Eyebrows à l’Orientale: Ingré’s *Baronne de Rothschild*’, *The Jewish Quarterly*, 147 (1992), 12–15.

<sup>99</sup> Valman, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp. 3–4.

<sup>102</sup> Valman, ‘Bad Jew/Good Jewess’, pp. 150–51.

<sup>103</sup> Valman, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> Valman, ‘Bad Jew/Good Jewess’, p. 151.

that the Russian Empire represented another extreme, as the state in Europe that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries treated its Jews as maximally different. Moreover, Valman's study is particularly strong in its analysis of how representations of Jews relate to national identity.

This thesis will draw on Valman's research, especially its analysis of probably the single most influential literary work, *Ivanhoe*. Scott's Jewish heroine Rebecca has been described as 'suggestive of chastity and the most passionate love combined – love conjugal and filial and maternal'.<sup>105</sup> Far from being a source of fear, Rebecca ultimately does not even threaten her Christian rival for the hero's affections, Rowena, renouncing her claims on *Ivanhoe* and giving Rowena her worldly possessions. In one scene, a Templar attempts to force Rebecca to have sexual intercourse with him, but the impression of this threat of violence is counteracted by the bravery and virtue apparent in Rebecca's refusal to submit even at the price of her life.<sup>106</sup> Scott thus established the Jewess in English literature as a beautiful, chaste, pious, noble martyr. However, apart from the ambiguity regarding her sexuality, her identity is also uncertain: although developing love for a Christian, she nevertheless chooses to leave England with her father rather than accept invitations to stay and convert. On the one hand, this action embodies Rebecca's 'Jewish' obstinacy and racial and religious loyalty and counters the progressive gestures of her host nation.<sup>107</sup> On the other hand, it associates the Jewess's positive qualities with her Jewishness, rather than facilely writing them off as revealing a Christian origin (as in Eugène Scribe's *La Juive*, the libretto to Fromental Halévy's opera) or as requiring Christianity to reify them, which were typical denouements of the Jewish father-daughter tale.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, Rebecca's refusal to convert is not just a matter of Jewish pride; it is also motivated by Christians' persecution of Jews.<sup>109</sup> However, Valman concludes:

her eroticism is uncomfortably assertive, and her heroism grounded also in her rigidity, which ultimately renders her resistant to conversion and social integration. Despite the universalising potential conferred by her gender, despite

<sup>105</sup> George du Maurier, *The Martian* (London, 1897), p. 140, quoted in Bitton-Jackson, p. 55.

<sup>106</sup> On this scene, see Valman, pp. 28–29.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>108</sup> Hyam Maccoby, *Antisemitism and Modernity* (London and New York, 2006), p. 92.

<sup>109</sup> Rosenshield, p. 13.

her tantalising proximity to enlightenment, Scott's Jewess is, in the end, rather similar to 'the Jew'.<sup>110</sup>

Valman finds that *Ivanhoe* and other works of nineteenth-century English literature invoke the Jewess both to make the Jews' case for tolerance and inclusion and to demarcate such liberalism because the Jewess's 'steadfast religiosity, passionate temperament or racial pride threaten to disrupt sexual and social order', and she often stubbornly resists conversion.<sup>111</sup>

Various changes occur in European literature's relation to the Jewess later in the nineteenth century. Bitton-Jackson finds a 'growing awareness of Jewish identity, together with her self-awareness as a person. She breaks the shackles of the romantic image and its compelling "feminine" passivity, and assumes a positive role as a symbol of Jewry's critical choices at the crossroads of the modern era'.<sup>112</sup> In both antisemitic and philosemitic texts, the Jewess tended to meet an ever more violent end as Europe moved into the twentieth century. Schiff recounts how, in the late nineteenth century, in many works of European literature, 'the *belle Juive* evolves into a bold, proud and occasionally vulgar woman, sometimes more accurately described as a *juive fatale*. Invariably handsome, she turns exploitative, canny about money [...] spirited, wilful and often unprincipled in getting her own way'.<sup>113</sup> The Jewish female towards the end of the nineteenth century was therefore increasingly perceived as similar to the stereotypical Jewish man who depended upon trickery and manipulation to get by in life. She was also often seen as embodying the 'modern woman', for example, by being liberated, educated, outspoken and possessing more intense sexuality.<sup>114</sup> Rather than the victim of men's desire to dominate sexually, she became the victimizer of men through her sexuality. This figure came to be associated with the spread of syphilis.<sup>115</sup> Even this seemingly modern Jewess has old archetypes, for example, medieval English folk ballads in which an apparently kind Jewess lures a Christian child into her home, only

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<sup>110</sup> Valman, p. 33.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 49–50.

<sup>112</sup> Bitton-Jackson, p. 67.

<sup>113</sup> Ellen Schiff, *From Stereotype to Metaphor: The Jew in Contemporary Drama* (New York, 1982), p. 23.

<sup>114</sup> Sander Gilman, 'Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the "Modern Jewess"', *The German Quarterly*, 66 (1993), 195–211 (pp. 205–06).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 200–01.

to turn into a monstrous beast and kill him.<sup>116</sup> Biberman reads this type of Jewish woman as an extension of the patriarchal, cruelly exploitative Jewish man.<sup>117</sup>

When it gained prominence in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, racial discourse often attributed the same fundamental negative characteristics to Jewish women as men. For many believers in racial theory, no longer was the Jewess, let alone the male Jew, redeemable through conversion: their very nature was fundamentally different from Gentiles', and flawed. The conditions for the Jewess's transformation into a negative character were inherent in her initial ambiguity, for 'in the Christian imagination, the sexuality of the Jewess is both dangerous and desirable'.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, women's and Jews' (and Jewish women's) perceived acquisition of greater power and independence during this period became the object of resentment of Gentiles and men.<sup>119</sup> The image of the Jewish woman as beautiful fitted into the ideology of Jews as corrupting and exploitative: antisemites could attribute to her the same qualities that they attributed to Jewish males, but could depict her as even more powerful (and therefore dangerous) than Jewish males because of her ability to seduce. The beauty that had once revealed the Jewess's amenability now became seen by some as a disguise to hide her evil intentions.

### Women in Russian Literature

Before examining scholarship on Jewish women in Russian literature, it is appropriate first to provide further context by summarizing the principal findings of research on Russian female characters. Many of the general features of the presentation of women in Russian literature as seen from a feminist perspective were identified by Barbara Heldt in *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (1987).<sup>120</sup> Heldt shares with another feminist scholar of Russian literature, Joe Andrew, a belief that almost all Russian literature is irredeemably misogynist.<sup>121</sup> They see in Russian literature a reflection of Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that woman, 'a free and autonomous being like all human creatures, nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel

<sup>116</sup> Matthew Biberman, *Masculinity, Anti-Semitism and Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2004), p. 28.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>118</sup> Garb, p. 27.

<sup>119</sup> On Gentiles' alleged resentment and fear of Jewish women's power, see Amy-Jill Levine, 'A Jewess, More and/or Less', in *Judaism Since Gender*, ed. by Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt (New York and London, 1997), pp. 149–57 (p. 151).

<sup>120</sup> Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (Bloomington, IN, and Indianapolis, 1987).

<sup>121</sup> Joe Andrew's works on the subject include *Women in Russian Literature: 1780–1863* (New York, 1988), and *Narrative and Desire in Russian Literature, 1822–49* (New York, 1993).

her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as an object.<sup>122</sup> Another major scholar of gender in Russian literature, Rosalind Marsh, summarizes the result of this perception of women in the Russian case: ‘The fundamental assumptions of patriarchal ideology – the perception of woman as object, “immanence”, “nature”, passivity or death, as opposed to man as subject, “transcendence”, “culture”, activity and life – have dominated all aspects of Russian social, political and cultural life.’<sup>123</sup> Marsh and Heldt claim that Russian and West European literature share a dichotomy in their general representations of women between the scheming and self-interested ‘whore’ and the chaste, self-sacrificing, motherly ‘Madonna’ figure.<sup>124</sup> Another key feature of Russian literature’s representation of women (also shared with West European literature), according to Heldt, is the effect of the patriarchal culture of suppressing women’s voices and allowing male voices to describe and explain women’s experiences.<sup>125</sup> Although women are often exalted as morally stronger and more virtuous than male characters, many feminist critics have seen these standards of behaviour as burdens upon women and a form of victimization because they are imposed upon them by men, who themselves are not obliged to follow them. If, on the other hand, women strive for self-definition, they are usually violently punished, according to Heldt.<sup>126</sup>

A study that predates the period in which feminist analysis of Russian literature blossomed, de Maegd-Soep’s *The Emancipation of Women in Russian Literature and Society: A Contribution to the Knowledge of the Russian Society During the 1860’s* (1978), offers a more positive assessment of classic Russian literature’s depiction of women: ‘literature had a beneficial effect on the development of the character of the Russian woman, who managed to become, in a very short time, the pioneer of a new world’.<sup>127</sup> Not only feminist works such as Chernyshevskii’s *Chto delat?*, but also more ambiguous texts such as Turgenev’s, provided women with positive role-models and encouraged women to pursue their own aspirations, most notably the improvement of society.

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<sup>122</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H. M. Parshley (New York, 1993), p. xxxiii.

<sup>123</sup> Rosalind Marsh, ‘Introduction: New Perspectives on Women and Gender in Russian Literature’, in Marsh, ed., *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 1–37 (p. 3).

<sup>124</sup> Marsh, *Gender and Russian Literature*, p. 12; Heldt, p. 13.

<sup>125</sup> Heldt, p. 6.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>127</sup> Carolina de Maegd-Soep, *The Emancipation of Women in Russian Literature and Society: A Contribution to the Knowledge of the Russian Society During the 1860’s* (Ghent, 1978), p. 23.

Sona Stephan Hoisington's edited volume *A Plot of Her Own: The Female Protagonist in Russian Literature* (1995) attempted to revise the widely accepted assumption of Russian literature's marginalization of female characters, arguing that some female characters played a far more central role and possessed far greater autonomy in works of Russian literature than most feminist critics had hitherto argued.<sup>128</sup> The various contributions in Hoisington's collection accuse some feminist scholars of themselves disregarding the uniqueness and importance of women characters, and argue that the assertion that Russian literature is able only to depict female characters as either virtuous or demonic is false. Through refusing to adopt the view that most male writers cannot help but invest their portrayals of female characters with hatred or at least belittle them, the contributors to this volume seek to present the female character of Russian literature in all her literary importance, variety and ambiguity, freeing her from the constraints of categorization placed upon her by some former studies.

Aspects of Hoisington's volume prompted both praise and criticism. For example, Marsh argued that a 'feminist' approach to the subject is still valid and that the area of research is still too young to merit 'revision'; however, she accepted that there are 'many gradations [...] between misogyny and feminism'.<sup>129</sup> One might make the tacit conclusion from Marsh's article that classic Russian literature is on the whole more sexist than misogynist: 'The principal advantage of the idealisation of women in male-authored nineteenth-century and socialist realist texts was that such portraits, albeit unrealistic and patriarchal, were at least flattering to Russian women'.<sup>130</sup>

Having established these larger scholarly and analytical contexts, I shall now embark on a survey of trends in the representations of Jewish women in pre-revolutionary Russian literature and of related scholarship, before summarizing the existing scholarship on the authors and texts that form the focus of this study.

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<sup>128</sup> Sona Stephan Hoisington, ed., *A Plot of Her Own: The Female Protagonist in Russian Literature* (Evanston, IL, 1995).

<sup>129</sup> Rosalind Marsh, 'An Image of Their Own?: Feminism, Revisionism and Russian Culture', in *Women and Russian Culture: Projections and Self-Perceptions*, ed. by Marsh (New York, 1998), pp. 2–41 (p. 32).

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

## Trends in the Representation of Jewish Women in Pre-Revolutionary Russian Literature

Like their Gentile counterparts, Jewish women in Russian literature of the first half of the nineteenth century were principally consigned to passive roles. Portrayals of Jewish women in Russia were largely limited to reworkings of Old Testament stories until the early nineteenth century.<sup>131</sup> *Ivanhoe* was phenomenally popular in Russia, and provided writers with a complicated, nuanced portrayal of a non-biblical Jewess for inspiration and imitation.<sup>132</sup> *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice* were also influential in the first half of the nineteenth century, when major writers such as Gogol', Pushkin, Lermontov and Turgenev incorporated Jewish female characters in their works.<sup>133</sup>

Not only literature but even bureaucratic documents concerning Jewish women converting to Christianity in the first half of the nineteenth century in Russia incorporate the salient elements of the Jewish father-daughter trope, such as the daughter's beauty and father's intolerance, to a degree too great not to be attributed to influence from the myths embedded in West European and Russian literature.<sup>134</sup> However, Fel'dman and Minkina argue that it is not simply a case of literary influence. Rather, both the documents and the literary texts arise from the same sphere, which is part of the Russian tradition of Orientalism.<sup>135</sup>

Examining the variations on the Jewish father-daughter trope in Russian literature allows one to demonstrate trends in the portrayal of the Jewess vis-à-vis the male Jew. Vaiskopf sees at the basis of the Jewish father-daughter plot a 'conflict

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<sup>131</sup> For a brief examination of Old Testament themes in Russian theatre up to the early nineteenth century, see Viktoria Levitina, *Russkii teatr i evrei*, 2 vols (Jerusalem, 1988), I, pp. 25–28. Prominent figures included the Jewish heroines Esther, Deborah and Judith.

<sup>132</sup> Krobb asserts that every Jewess in European literature shows at least some of the features that Scott gives Rebecca (Krobb, 'La Belle Juive', p. 9). On the impact of Scott's novel and heroine on Russian culture see M. Al'tshuller, *Epokha Val'tera Skotta v Rossii: Istoricheskii roman 1830-kh godov* (St Petersburg, 1996). On the novel's influence on Bulgarin's works with Jewish characters and on *Taras Bul'ba*, see Rosenshield's second chapter, 'Taras Bulba and the Jewish Literary Context', pp. 61–73.

<sup>133</sup> On Jewish women in Gogol' and Turgenev, see below. Works by Pushkin relating to Jewish women include his mock-biblical epic 'Gavriliada' (1821) and his short poem 'Khristos voskres, moia Revekka!' (1821), while among Lermontov's are his long poem 'Sashka' (1835–36, 1839). All these works draw on the stereotype of Jewish women as carnal and sexually attractive. Lermontov's 'Kuda tak provorno, zhidovka mladaia?' (1832) and his philosemitic play *Ispantsy* (which he wrote as a teenager but which was first published in 1880) offer more sympathetic portrayals of the *belle juive*.

<sup>134</sup> D. Z. Fel'dman and O. Iu. Minkina, 'K voprosu o priniatii evreiskimi zhenshchinami khristianstva v Rossii v kontse XVIII–nachale XIX vekov', in Fel'dman, Minkina and A. Iu. Kononova, 'Prekrasnaiia evreika' v Rossii XVII–XIX vekov: obrazy i real'nost'. *Stat'i i dokumenty* (Moscow, 2007), pp. 55–104 (p. 92).

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 92–93.

between savage Law and eroticized Grace'.<sup>136</sup> Lermontov's poem 'Kuda tak provorno, zhidovka mladaia?' (1832) embodies this description: the Jewish father fulfils the Law by killing his daughter, whose beauty and forsaking of the Law for Christian love attest to her eroticized Grace.

In keeping with the portrayal of Jews in West European and Russian literature, Vaiskopf finds that positive portrayals of Jews in Russian Romantic literature are almost always limited to Jewish women.<sup>137</sup> He singles out as an apparent exception a variant on the father-daughter theme, I. I. Lazhechnikov's (1792–1869) play *Vsia beda ot styda* (1858). One of the earliest texts about the modern-day conversion of Jews to Christianity in Russia, it concerns a baptized 27-year-old Jewess, Nataliia Gorislavskaya, who had been adopted at the age of 20 by a loving, rich Russian woman. Nataliia's beauty, kindness and noble manner make her an attractive figure. However, she is ashamed of her Jewish origin. When her father arrives in town, she at first wishes to do everything she can to persuade him to leave her alone, but his insistence that he has long wished to convert to Christianity wins her over, as well as those characters whose opinions are most dear to her. The play ends happily: Nataliia, no longer ashamed of her origin, is free to marry the person who truly loves her (rather than the man who attempted to blackmail her into marrying him by threatening to make public her Jewish origins), and her father is fully accepted into Nataliia's society. While the play affirms the possibility of brotherhood between Jews and non-Jews, albeit only via Christianity, it is, as usual, the Jewess who is the pioneer, the Jewish father following his daughter and only emerging from the darkness of non-Christendom towards the end of the play.

K. M. Staniukovich's (1843–1903) novel *Pokhozhdeniya odnogo matrosa* (1899) takes the Jewish father-daughter plot out of the context of Christianization, but leaves the features of the father and daughter largely intact, showing the potential secularization of the trope. The daughter, Rivka, falls in love with a sailor who is one of many whom the father, Abram, has duped into working for him as a virtual slave. Rivka's guilt at her past compliance leads her to tell the sailor of her father's plan. However, the guilt torments her for the rest of her life. After her death, Abram's awareness of the anguish to which his actions subjected Rivka prompt him to realize his own wrongdoings and to vow to mend his wicked ways. Though this is rare, the Jewess

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<sup>136</sup> Vaiskopf, p. 84.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

in Russian, as in English, literature can function as a redeemer even of the stubborn Jewish father.

In the late nineteenth century, authors embedded the Jewish father-daughter trope into the context of the fight for social justice. In R. I. Sementkovskii's novella *Evrei i zhidy* (1890), the Jewish heroine Raisa's education brings her to realize the enormous gap between her life as the daughter of a rich banker and the life of the masses, whom Raisa's father mercilessly exploits.<sup>138</sup> She wishes to help the poor in Russian society, but is thwarted by her father's decision to marry her off to a rich Jew of similarly exploitative inclinations. She dedicates her married life to charitable deeds. However, she is heartbroken at not being able to integrate into Russian society and at her lack of control over her life, and especially at not being able to marry the Russian Vladimir, with whom she fell in love but who distrusted her, wrongly believing that she looked down on him for being forced by poverty to work for her father (in fact, Raisa had been unaware of the full extent of Vladimir's co-operation). Having become seriously ill, Raisa dies three years into her marriage.

By the turn of the century, then, the Jewish father in Russian literature had come to embody the status quo in all its injustices, while the daughter often stood for enlightened, self-sacrificing youth, thwarted in its battle for justice by the brutality of the old regime and patriarchal tradition. Sementkovskii retains the traditional antisemitic opposition between the father stuck in his nefarious Jewish ways and the daughter who has rejected such values. Although the Jewish father in the novella represents the tyranny of both the Jewish and the Gentile spheres, the work suggests that Jews make a contribution to injustice in the Empire that is disproportionate to their numbers. Furthermore, although the values that the daughter adopts are presented as Russian progressive values without any explicit references to Christianity, they have much in common with those presented as Christian in older texts, such as the idea of tolerance and universal love. Moreover, the dichotomous relationship that the work establishes between Jewish and 'progressive' values echoes that between Jewish and Christian values as depicted in earlier texts. Consequently, while towards the turn of the century and beyond the father-daughter trope becomes secularized, the same fundamental oppositions operate, as do the assumptions of Christian, or Gentile, moral superiority over Jews.

However, Russian literature uses the Jewess not only to criticize Jewry, but also to condemn Russian society, and a common trope of Russian literature is the Jewess's

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<sup>138</sup> I. V. Antarov [R. I. Sementkovskii], *Evrei i zhidy* (St Petersburg, 1890), p. 110.

victimization at the hands of Russians. It would appear that the tendency to criticize Gentile society through the Jewess is more prominent in Russian than in West European literature.

The figure of the Jewess in Russian literature, particularly before the 1880s, frequently embodies the ultimate victim, one never able to escape the status because she can never escape her origins. Turgenev's novella *Neschastnaia* (1869) encapsulates the theme of the Jewess suffering in a cruel Gentile society, as well as other salient themes that accrued around the figure of the Jewess. The beautiful, passionate and talented Susanna is the illegitimate daughter of a noble Russian father, Ivan Koltsovskoi, and a Jewish mother, who dies when Susanna is fifteen, and whom Koltsovskoi had married off to his estate manager, a Bohemian, Ratch. Ratch never loved Susanna's mother and only married her for her money. Both he and Koltsovskoi treat Susanna coldly. Upon Koltsovskoi's death, his brother, Sem'en, takes over the management of the estate. The members of the household conspire to ruin Susanna's chance of happiness and forestall her acquisition of money left to her by her father. Twice they prevent her from marrying men she loves, in the second instance shaming her by convincing the suitor that she has offered sexual services in exchange for payment, as a result of which the suitor leaves her.<sup>139</sup> Susanna is struck with shame and grief and the work ends with her death, although it is not clear whether it is these emotions, suicide, or even another person, that kills her.

Susanna shows the typical amenability of the Jewess to assimilation, not only speaking and writing Russian perfectly but also winning the love of a decent Russian man (her first suitor). Despite her Jewish origins, she is a greater Christian than most of the Gentile characters. However, she remains alien for many and dependent on the good will of the society in which finds herself, a position that renders her vulnerable to exploitation and to accusations of improper conduct. The story of Susanna points to two major themes relating to the Jewess's portrayal in much Russian literature: on the one hand, her devoted, loving, self-sacrificing nature, which places her in the ranks of Russian 'Madonna' figures; on the other hand, her passion, beauty and exotic origins, which are commonly (and often wrongly, as in '*Neschastnaia*') interpreted as indicating ease of sexual availability.

Katz's chapter on Turgenev is pioneering in that it demonstrates how Russian literature through Turgenev and through the image of the Jewess was able to rise above

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<sup>139</sup> Other examples of Russian works in which the Jewess is jilted by a Gentile lover, a common trope in West European and Russian literature, include N. G. Garin-Mikhailovskii's '*Revekka*' (1896) and M. P. Artsybashev's '*Mstitel'* (1913).

stereotyping and ‘othering’ in relation to Jews, contrary to the assertions of much scholarship.<sup>140</sup> (It should be noted that typical Turgenevan gender stereotypes nevertheless attach to Susanna; she is very much in the mould of the author’s positive Russian heroines.) Analysing ‘Neschastnaia’ in terms of Russian national discourse, Katz concludes: ‘The amalgamation of Russian and Jewish identities in [Susanna’s] image gives Turgenev a way of fashioning a discourse of common humanity which transcends national and ethnic boundaries.’<sup>141</sup> In Turgenev’s Jewess, Jewishness is not an exclusive category, for Susanna possesses elements of both the Western stereotype of the Jewess and the typical Russian heroine.<sup>142</sup> This contrasts strongly with the typical portrayal of Jewish males in Russian literature, whom writers, including Turgenev, tend to portray according to sets of stereotypical characteristics. In this thesis I build on Katz’s study to show on the basis of a broader and more representative range of texts that, as in English literature, the Jewess is not consistently portrayed as entirely Other, nor as defined exclusively by her Jewishness. For example, in Chapter Two I demonstrate this through my study of a heroine who, unlike Susanna, is completely Jewish by birth, Tamara of Krestovskii’s *Zhid idet*.

For Katz, Turgenev introduces into Russian literature, particularly through Susanna but also in other works such as his short story ‘Zhid’ (1847), a greater ambiguity in the portrayal of Jews that makes it difficult to pigeonhole his depictions into the categories of antisemitic or philosemitic. This brings his portrayals closer to those of liberal strands of Western culture.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, Katz demonstrates how Turgenev uses Susanna to invoke sympathy for all marginalized women in the Russian Empire, not only by giving her Russian as well as Jewish origins but also by demonstrating that her plight has features in common with that of women throughout the Empire.<sup>144</sup> Through Turgenev, the Jewish woman comes to stand for marginalized groups, a role that later Russian writers would highlight and develop in their own discourses on Russian society, as I demonstrate in this thesis.

Rosenshield, another leading scholar in the field of the representation of Jews in Russian literature, shows how the Jewess is able to attenuate the depictions of Jews in a writer whose works are notoriously scathing in their portrayal of Jews, Gogol’. Rosenshield highlights a scene in *Taras Bul’ba* (1842), a work that was enormously

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<sup>140</sup> Katz, pp. 194–271.

<sup>141</sup> Katz, p. 263.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 269.

influential for portrayals of Jews in Russian literature in the nineteenth century and beyond and which tends to eulogize Cossack death as heroic but ridicule Jewish death. The hero's younger son comes across the body of a Jewish mother who, like many of the inhabitants of the besieged Polish town he has entered, has starved to death; her child, finding no sustenance in his mother's body, is near death.<sup>145</sup> Rosenshield argues that the Jewess serves to question the text's opposition between Jews and Russians and Cossacks through highlighting the universality of suffering and death.<sup>146</sup> No longer are Jewish difference and ridiculousness thrown into relief; rather, the physical description of the Jewess is neutral, shorn of Jewish peculiarities, and what is emphasized is her suffering, which could be the suffering of anyone from any ethnic group.<sup>147</sup> Gogol's Jewess imparts to the work the sense of a shared humanity, albeit through death, that transcends perceived ethnic differences and enmity. Consequently, Rosenshield concludes, while the male Jew often serves to define the heroic virtues of Russian (or, in this case, Cossack) males, the Jewess can reveal the artificiality and arbitrariness of all such characterization.<sup>148</sup> Rosenshield's example serves to show that even in such a seemingly one-sided work as *Taras Bul'ba* the Jewess can upset conventions and even the ideological foundation of whole literary texts. In this thesis I trace the development of the themes that Gogol's Jewess evokes in relation to the Jewess in works in which Jewish women have a far more active role.

The universalizing quality of the Jewess is frequently portrayed, as in *Taras Bul'ba*, in a tragic context such that she tends to universalize suffering and victimhood. She is often presented as inexorably doomed by her Jewishness to suffering and a tragic fate, as suggested by the title of Turgenev's work, *Neschastnaia*, and encapsulated in the following lament by Susanna shortly before her death: 'Я чувствую бездну, темную бездну под ногами [...] О, бедное, бедное мое племя, племя вечных странников, проклятие лежит на тебе!'<sup>149</sup> Sartre's reference to Jewish women in the Russian Empire facing both the destruction of their communities and sexual violence is indicative of the manner in which in Russia and Russian literature sexual abuse of Jewish women was associated with the humiliation of all Jewry. Various works depicting pogroms highlight in particular the rape and murder of Jewish women among

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<sup>145</sup> N. V. Gogol', *Taras Bul'ba*, in Gogol', *Sobranie sochinenii*, 9 vols (Moscow, 1994), II, pp. 218–320 (p. 262).

<sup>146</sup> Rosenshield, pp. 88–96.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>149</sup> I. S. Turgenev, *Neschastnaia*, in Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols (Moscow, 1978–86), VIII, pp. 61–137 (p. 90).

the general carnage.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, increasingly in pre-revolutionary Russian literature the fate of Jews as a whole appears to be embodied by and sometimes even determined by Jewish women and their relation to violence. For example, in Chapter Two I show how in Chirikov's *Evrei* the heroine, Liia, comes to embody Jewish dignity in the face of evil when she kills herself instead of submitting to certain rape and murder. Just as Jewish women such as Sementkovskii's Raisa and Staniukovich's Rivka are portrayed as bearing the burden of guilt for the actions of their fathers (and to some extent their nation as a whole), so they are also seen as bearing the brunt of suffering in other ways and as the key to the future of the Jews, whether through fostering redemption within the nation or helping to defend its worth. The Jewess in Russian literature typically does not succeed in redeeming Russians. However, in Korolenko's sketch 'Dom nomer 13' (1903), a Jewess apparently instils a sense of shame and the need to repent in a pogromist just by asking him to leave her father alone, embodying the Jewess's extraordinary capacity to transform morally and to end violence through the engendering of sympathy, rather than to provoke it through her attractiveness.<sup>151</sup>

While, as we have seen, many Jewish female characters in Russian literature bear comparison both with the *belle juive* of West European literature and with the virtuous, self-sacrificing Russian heroines of Russian literature, there is also a less prominent type of Jewess, typically a mother, who is repulsive and portrayed as utterly 'other'. The figure of the dirty Jewess with a multitude of freakish children is far less prominent in nineteenth-century Russian literature than that of the *belle juive*, but is sufficiently common to constitute a trend in literary representations of the Jewess. For example, in Krestovskii's *Krovavyi puf* (1874) an inn-owner's wife is described as 'неопределенных лет грязная шинкарка-жидовка' and her children, who squeal and emit an odour, as 'мал мала меньше'.<sup>152</sup> A passage in Pisemskii's *Meshchane* (1878) completely dehumanizes the figure of the Jewish mother and her children: 'грязную, растрепанную и ведьме подобную жидовку и ее безобразных, полунагих жиденят,

<sup>150</sup> Probably the most detailed and harrowing accounts of rape during pogroms belong to Russian-Jewish authors. See, for example, David Aizman's story 'Krovavyi razliv' (1906) and Semen Iushkevich's novel *Evrei* (1906). These and other Russian-Jewish-authored texts about the 1905 pogroms are discussed in Zsuzsa Hetényi, "Three Serpents with Tongues and Eyes of Flame": The 1905 Pogroms in Russian-Jewish Literature, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 40:3 (2010), 285–96.

<sup>151</sup> V. G. Korolenko, 'Dom nomer 13', in Korolenko, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 10 vols (Moscow, 1953–56), IX, pp. 406–22 (pp. 417–18).

<sup>152</sup> Vsevolod Krestovskii, *Krovavyi puf*, 2 vols (Moscow, 1995), II, p. 14.

выскочивших из своей подвалной берлоги в количестве трех-четырех существ,<sup>153</sup>

In Chapter Three I examine another negative figure, the demonic Jewess, who is typically characterized as a cruel, crafty seductress, tempting men into vice and treachery. Like the Jewish male, she is often associated with activities that bring shame on or weaken Russians or Christians as a whole. The demonic Jewess is therefore presented within the context of national or religious conflict. Especially from the 1880s, such Jewish women are depicted as part of the Jewish world-conspiracy. Yet these figures are not complete departures from the type of the *belle juive* or that of the dirty, repulsive Jewess. They combine aspects of the two: beautiful and passionate like the *belle juive*, they hide their true nature, which is ‘other’ to how Russians would like to perceive themselves, and which infects morally and, often, physically.

### **Secondary Literature on the Writers Covered in This Thesis**

Apart from Chekhov, Kuprin and, to a lesser extent, An-skii, there is little scholarship on the writers covered in this thesis. This is despite the fact that their works depicting Jews evoked a considerable contemporary response in newspapers and journals across the whole ideological spectrum, from Russian-Jewish liberal journals like *Voskhod* to conservative antisemitic newspapers like *Novoe vremia*. Within the chapters, I contextualize the works that I examine by referring selectively to these contemporary reactions, but I do not give a detailed study of reception. Although many of the studies that I cite below do discuss Jewish women in the texts that form the focus of my thesis, they usually do so only briefly, and none of them analyses the writers’ Jewish female characters from the broad perspective of Jewish women in Russian and West European literature as a whole to the extent that this thesis does.

Of all the Jewish female characters in my study only Susanna of Chekhov’s ‘Tina’ has benefited from a significant level of scholarly attention. Notable studies of Chekhov’s Jews include a section in Kunitz’s monograph;<sup>154</sup> an article by Rosenshield;<sup>155</sup> a chapter on Jewish assimilation in Chekhov’s works in Safran’s

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<sup>153</sup> A. F. Pisemskii, *Meshchane*, in Pisemskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v deviatyi tomakh*, 9 vols (Moscow, 1959), VII, pp. 3–338 (p. 280).

<sup>154</sup> Kunitz, pp. 108–16.

<sup>155</sup> Gary Rosenshield, ‘Dostoevskii’s “The Funeral of the Universal Man” and “An Isolated Case” and Chekhov’s “Rothschild’s Fiddle”: The Jewish Question’, *Russian Review*, 56 (1997), 487–504.

*Rewriting the Jew*;<sup>156</sup> Helena Tolstoy's 'From Susanna to Sarra: Chekhov in 1886–1887' (1991), which examines Chekhov's two principal Jewish female characters in the light of Chekhov's real-life romance with and engagement to a Jewess;<sup>157</sup> and Mondry's chapter exploring how ideas on race informed Chekhov's Jewish characters.<sup>158</sup>

For a detailed biography of Kuprin that discusses his works featuring Jews, see Luker's study.<sup>159</sup> Significant studies on Kuprin's Jews, including his female ones, are an article by Rischin<sup>160</sup> and a section in Krotov's monograph on Jews in Russian literature.<sup>161</sup> While these two works examine 'Zhidovka', most of the studies that examine Kuprin's Jews limit their analysis to other works, such as his novel *Iama*.<sup>162</sup>

For general accounts of Chirikov's life and works, see Bugrov's and Liubimova's dictionary entries.<sup>163</sup> Chirikov's Jewish characters in his oeuvre as a whole are covered by Levitina,<sup>164</sup> while Mariia Mikhailova's two articles focus on *Evrei*.<sup>165</sup>

Of the three overtly antisemitic writers whom I study (Krestovskii, Vagner and Kryzhanovskaiia), Krestovskii's Jews have received the most scholarly attention. For a biography of the writer, brief discussions of his major works and a bibliography of scholarship, see Kabat.<sup>166</sup> Krestovskii's friend Elets provides a more detailed biography

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<sup>156</sup> Safran, 'Mutable, Permutable, Approximate, and Relative: Anton Chekhov', in Safran, pp. 147–89.

<sup>157</sup> Helena Tolstoy, 'From Susanna to Sarra: Chekhov in 1886–1887', *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), 590–600.

<sup>158</sup> 'Stereotypes of Pathology: The Medicalization of the Jewish Body by Anton Chekhov, 1880s', in Mondry, pp. 41–63

<sup>159</sup> Nicholas Luker, *Alexander Kuprin* (Boston, 1978).

<sup>160</sup> Rischin, Ruth, ‘“The Most Historical of Peoples”: Yushkevich, Kuprin and the Dubnovian Idea’, in *The Short Story in Russia 1900–1917*, ed. by Nicholas Luker (Nottingham, 1991), pp. 23–52.

<sup>161</sup> E. V. Krotov, *Evrei i russkoe obshchestvo v zerkale otechestvennoi literatury vtoroi poloviny XIX–nachala XX veka* (Penza, 2007), pp. 123–35.

<sup>162</sup> See, for example, Safran, pp. 153–54; and Julie A. Cassiday and Leyla Rouhi, 'From Nevskii Prospekt to Zoia's Apartment: Trials of the Russian Procureess', *Russian Review*, 58 (1999), 413–31.

<sup>163</sup> B. S. Bugrov, 'Chirikov, Evgenii Nikolaevich', in *Russkie pisateli: Biobibliograficheskii slovar'*, ed. by P. A. Nikolaev, 2 vols (Moscow, 1990), II, pp. 392–94. M. Iu. Liubimova, 'Chirikov, Evgenii Nikolaevich', in *Russkaia literatura XX veka: prozaiki, poetry, dramaturgi: Slovar'*, ed. by N. N. Skatov, 3 vols (Moscow, 2005), III, pp. 648–51.

<sup>164</sup> Levitina, *Russkii teatr i evrei*, II, pp. 59–102.

<sup>165</sup> Mariia Mikhailova, 'Stsenicheskaiia istoriia p'esy E. N. Chirikova “Evrei”', in *Jews and Slavs. Volume 17*, ed. by Vladimir Khazan and Wolf Moskovich (Jerusalem, 2006), pp. 254–64; and idem, 'Evreiskaia tema v tvorchestve E. N. Chirikova i “chirikovskii intsident”', in *Parallel: russko-evreiskii istoriko-literaturnyi i bibliograficheskii al'manakh: No. 2–3*, ed. by K. Iu. Burmistrov (Moscow, 2003), pp. 163–88.

<sup>166</sup> Grazyna Lipska Kabat, 'Vsevolod Vladimirovich Krestovsky', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography. Volume 238: Russian Novelists in the Age of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky*, ed. by J. Alexander Ogden and Judith E. Kalb (Farmington Hills, 2001), pp. 144–53.

in his Introduction to Krestovskii's collected works.<sup>167</sup> Of the contemporary reviews of *Zhid idet*, Dubnov provides useful criticism of the work, taking apart what he sees at its lack of realism, although his two reviews only cover the first two novels in the trilogy.<sup>168</sup> Both Safran and Kabat treat the Jewish heroine Tamara of Krestovskii's *Zhid idet* and the novel as a whole briefly but insightfully.<sup>169</sup> Kowalczyk devotes an article to *Zhid idet*, but his analysis of Tamara is inadequate.<sup>170</sup> Dudakov treats the novel and other works by Krestovskii portraying Jews in depth, but focuses more on antisemitism and Jews in general than on Tamara as such.<sup>171</sup> The section on the novel in this thesis traces the development of Tamara's character and the relation between her characterization and the ideological orientations of the work to a greater extent than has been done in previous studies.

As for Vagner, Mil'don gives a brief but thorough summary of his life and works, both those intended for children (written under the pseudonym Kot-Murlyka) and those written for adults.<sup>172</sup> Dudakov provides a brief biography of the writer and examines his antisemitism and *Temnyi put'* in some depth.<sup>173</sup> My section on the novel takes the analysis further by comparing Vagner's demonic Jewess with the 'angelic' one who appears at the end of the novel, and also with Vagner's non-Jewish female characters, as well as the demonic Jewess of another antisemitic writer, Kryzhanovskaia. There are a number of contemporary reviews of *Temnyi put'*.<sup>174</sup> In a work published in 1908 on recent Russian literature, a Jewish contemporary of Vagner, A. G. Gornfel'd, writing just after Vagner's death, recalls Vagner's children's stories with fondness and praise, but describes his horror upon reading *Temnyi put'* and another antisemitic work, the short story 'Mirra' (1887).<sup>175</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Iu. L. Elets, 'Biografija Vsevoloda Vladimirovicha Krestovskogo', in *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by Elets, 8 vols (St Petersburg, 1899–1900), I, pp. iii–lv.

<sup>168</sup> S. M. Dubnov, 'Literaturnaia letopis'. T'ma egipetskaia/Kritikus', *Voskhod*, 6 (1889), 7–30; and idem, 'Literaturnaia letopis'. Tamara Bendavid/Kritikus', *Voskhod*, 1 (1891), 24–41.

<sup>169</sup> Safran, pp. 98–106, and Kabat, p. 151.

<sup>170</sup> Witold Kowalczyk, 'Stereotyp Žyda w tworczosci Wsiewoloda Kriestowskiego (na przykładzie trylogii "Żyd")', in *Literackie portrety Żydów*, ed. by Eugenia Łoch (Lublin, 1996), pp. 273–83.

<sup>171</sup> Dudakov, pp. 118–30.

<sup>172</sup> V. I. Mil'don, 'Vagner, Nikolai Petrovich', in *Russkie pisateli. 1800–1917. Biograficheskii slovar'*, 4 vols, ed. by P. A. Nikolaev et al. (Moscow, 1989–94), I, pp. 385–86.

<sup>173</sup> Dudakov, pp. 242–58.

<sup>174</sup> The most thorough is Frug's four-part review: Sluchainyi fel'etonist [S. G. Frug], 'Mimokhodom: "Iz dal'nikh stranstvii" (Po povodu odnogo romana)', *Nedel'naia khronika Voskhoda*, 3 (1890), pp. 76–79; 4 (1890), pp. 107–11; 5 (1890), pp. 132–35; 6 (1890), pp. 156–59.

<sup>175</sup> A. G. Gornfel'd, *Knigi i liudi* (St Petersburg, 1908), pp. 228–35.

Despite the fact that the virulent strain of antisemitism that some of Kryzhanovskaia's works peddle represented one of the cornerstones of a worldview prevalent in late tsarist Russia, the few references to her in scholarship make little or no mention of her antisemitism, tending to focus on her status as the most famous spiritualist novelist in fin-de-siècle Russia.<sup>176</sup> Dudakov is an exception, but he does not analyse any of Kryzhanovskaia's Jewish characters.<sup>177</sup> My analysis of her novel *Mertvaiia petlia* therefore constitutes the first detailed study of this important writer's Jewish characters.

Aizman, similarly, has received little scholarly attention.<sup>178</sup> Stone Nakhimovsky's insightful article mentions the prevalence of the dedicated female Jewish revolutionary in Aizman's oeuvre, but she limits her analysis to his short stories,<sup>179</sup> as does Hetényi.<sup>180</sup> The play by him that I analyse, *Ternovyi kust* (1907), is probably his best-known work. Most of the Russian-language criticism treating it is written from a Marxist perspective,<sup>181</sup> but Levitina's brief study, which conceives it as a 'purely Jewish tragedy', is an exception; she also gives more attention to Aizman's female characters than other scholars.<sup>182</sup>

Scholarship on An-skii is more extensive, not least because of his pioneering work in the ethnography of east European Jewry; the fact that he belongs to both Russian and Yiddish literature; and the worldwide fame of his play *The Dybbuk*.<sup>183</sup> For

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<sup>176</sup> See A. I. Reitblat, 'Kryzhanovskaia, Vera Ivanovna', in *Russkie pisateli. 1800–1917*, III (1994), pp. 173–74; Maria Carlson, 'Rochester, J. W.', in *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers*, ed. by Marina Ledkovsky, Charlotte Rosenthal and Mary Zirin (Westport, CT, and London, 1994), pp. 538–40; and Muireann Maguire, 'Ghostwritten: Reading Spiritualism and Feminism in the Works of Rachilde and Vera Kryzhanovskaia-Rochester', *The Modern Language Review*, 106 (2011), 313–32. Kryzhanovskaia often wrote under the pseudonyms Rochester-Kryzhanovskaia and Rochester.

<sup>177</sup> Dudakov, *IOM*, pp. 175–76.

<sup>178</sup> For a more detailed summary of the scholarship and of contemporary reactions to his work, see G. M. Mironov and M. G. Mironova, 'Aizman, David Iakovlevich', in *Russkie pisateli. 1800–1917*, I, pp. 26–27.

<sup>179</sup> Alice Stone-Nakhimovsky, 'Encounters: Russians and Jews in the Short Stories of David Aizman', *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 26 (1985), 175–83 (p. 179).

<sup>180</sup> Zsuzsa Hetényi, *In a Maelstrom: The History of Russian-Jewish Prose (1860–1940)*, trans. by János Boris (Budapest, 2008), pp. 139–48 and pp. 259–60.

<sup>181</sup> See, for example, I. N. Kubikov, *Rabochii klass v russkoi literature* (Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 1926), pp. 172–74, and the chapter 'Gor'kii i dramaturgi-'znan'evtsy': Chirikov, Iushkevich, Naidenov, Aizman', in Iu. Iuzovskii, *Maksim Gor'kii i ego dramaturgiia* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 317–53.

<sup>182</sup> See V. B. Levitina, *I evrei...moia krov'* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 98–123, for Levitina's chapter on Aizman; the section on *Ternovyi kust* is on pp. 103–08.

<sup>183</sup> Most well-known to readers and audiences throughout the world in its Yiddish version or in translations from it, *The Dybbuk* was originally written in Russian (An-skii finished writing it in 1917). For a republication of the original text, see S. An-skii, *Mezh dvukh mirov (Dibuk)*, in

a brief biography and bibliography, see Garrett's entry in *Writers in Yiddish*.<sup>184</sup> Hetényi's discussion of An-skii's works does not cover *V novom rusle* (1907),<sup>185</sup> despite listing it as one of his main works written in Russian in her short biography of the writer.<sup>186</sup> Safran and Zipperstein have edited a major collection of essays on An-skii's life and work, one of which examines the prominent place of Jewish women in An-skii's ethnographical studies.<sup>187</sup> Safran's monograph, *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk's Creator, S. An-sky* (2010), examines An-skii's life and work in depth.<sup>188</sup> Mondry's article on An-skii's Jewish and Russian female characters is concerned with an earlier period in An-skii's career, and with more traditional Jewish women than the revolutionaries with whom I am concerned in my chapter on him.<sup>189</sup> The work by An-skii on which my chapter focuses, the novella *V novom rusle* (1907), has been ably but briefly analysed by Krutikov,<sup>190</sup> Frankel<sup>191</sup> and Safran;<sup>192</sup> however, only Frankel gives considerable attention to the Jewish female characters in the work, and I draw on and expand upon his study in my analysis.

### Structure of the Thesis

The focus of this dissertation is the texts themselves and its structure is largely theme-driven rather than author-centred. However, in each chapter I focus on two writers whose works exemplify or offer a particularly striking or challenging approach to certain tropes with regard to the representation of the Jewess. I eschew detailed

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*Mnemozina. Dokumenty i fakty iz istorii otechestvennogo teatra XX veka* (Moscow, 2004), pp. 17–58.

<sup>184</sup> Leah Garrett, 'S. Ansky', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 333: Writers in Yiddish*, ed. by Joseph Sherman (Farmington Hills, 2007), pp. 3–7.

<sup>185</sup> Hetényi, *In a Maelstrom*, pp. 120–31.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 260–61.

<sup>187</sup> Nathaniel Deutsch, 'An-sky and the Ethnography of Jewish Women', in *The Worlds of S. An-sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, ed. by Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, 2006), pp. 266–80.

<sup>188</sup> Gabriella Safran, *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk's Creator, S. An-sky* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2010).

<sup>189</sup> Henrietta Mondry, 'Ot Gleba Uspenskogo k Semenu Anskomu: evreiskie i russkie zhenskie obrazy v russkoiaazychnykh ocherkakh S. An-skogo', in *Jews and Slavs*, Vol. 21, ed. by W. Moskovich and I. Fijalkowska-Janiak (Jerusalem and Gdańsk, 2008), pp. 219–29.

<sup>190</sup> Mikhail Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity, 1905–1914* (Stanford, 2001), pp. 79–83. Krutikov analyses the slightly reworked and shorter translation of *V novom rusle* into Yiddish, *In Shtrom* (1907).

<sup>191</sup> Jonathan Frankel's examination of *V novom rusle* in the context of other Jewish-authored works reacting to the 1905 Revolution, 'Youth In Revolt: An-sky's *In Shtrom* and the Instant Fictionalization of 1905', has been published both in Safran and Zipperstein's edited volume, pp. 137–63, and in Frankel's monograph, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 72–97.

<sup>192</sup> Safran, *Wandering Soul*, pp. 132–38.

biography but do contextualize the writers and their works. Rather than examining the representation of Jewish women in the entire oeuvre of individual writers, I select representative texts and analyse the Jewish female characters within each of them in the light of other characters in the work and of the portrayal of Jewish women in Russian literature as a whole.

The first chapter, ‘The Jewish Feminine’, examines the treatment of tropes relating to the Jewess in works by two major Russian writers of the fin-de-siècle well known for their Jewish male and female characters and interest in the situation of Jews in the Empire, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860–1904) and Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin (1870–1938). These two authors were also pioneering in their depiction of Jews. For example, Chekhov introduced to Russian literature detailed portraits of Jews informed by racial science,<sup>193</sup> while Gorev finds that Kuprin was one of the first writers to portray positively active, physically strong and courageous Jewish characters.<sup>194</sup> Focusing on two major portrayals of Jewish women, Chekhov’s short story ‘Tina’ (1886) and Kuprin’s short story ‘Zhidovka’ (1904), I discuss how these texts relate to the alleged sexualization of the Jewess, and the extent to which the authors’ treatment of them is informed by the racial discourse of the time. Both authors were known as writers of moderate ideological convictions and as more prone to observation of life than to its tendentious judgement. Both writers in their works and private correspondence expressed neutral or complimentary attitudes towards Jews and yet also made pronouncements that can only be classed as antisemitic. Moreover, while the Jewesses of the later chapters strive towards socio-political goals, these two writers’ Jews generally lack them.<sup>195</sup> The authors and their Jewesses therefore act as a counterbalance to the more tendentious writers and more political Jewesses of the later chapters.

While the texts analysed in Chapter One problematically explore the extent of the Jewess’s otherness, in Chapter Two, ‘The Jewess and Assimilation’, the Jewess’s adaptability and capacity for self-sacrifice come to the forefront. The principal texts, Vsevolod Vladimirovich Krestovskii’s (1839–1895) trilogy *Zhid idet* (1888–91) and Evgenii Nikolaevich Chirikov’s (1864–1932) play *Evrei* (1904), are written from two contrasting ideological positions. While Krestovskii was a nationalistic, reactionary antisemite, Chirikov was a liberal progressive. Yet both writers portray the Jewess as morally superior to most of the other characters, both Russian and Jewish. They identify the Jewess as possessing features distinct to her national or racial group and at the same

<sup>193</sup> See Mondry, pp. 41–55.

<sup>194</sup> Gorev, pp. 27–28.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., pp. 24, 28.

time features that transcend the limits of the national or racial, rendering her an ideal vehicle for universalist concepts such as love for all humanity and, in Chirikov's case, an antipathy to national and religious chauvinism. Both writers condemn Russian society through the figure of the Jewess.

The depiction of Jewish women as revolutionaries is examined in Chapters Three and Four of the thesis. Here I demonstrate that the stereotypical qualities of the Jewess can be used, depending on the writer's ideological standpoint, to depict her either as a demonic 'Other' using her sexual attractiveness and flair at assimilation to infiltrate revolutionary groups in order to further a Jewish conspiracy to take control of Russia and destroy the Russian nation (the subject of Chapter Three), or as an ideal participant in the struggle for equality and for an end to injustice in the Russian Empire and in the world (as I show in Chapter Four). Chapter Three, 'The Demonic Jewess', looks at the figure of the Jewess in works informed by occult and racial antisemitism. The works analysed combine negative aspects of the characterization of the 'Jewish feminine' and Jewish women's assimilation identified in the preceding chapters. I demonstrate that, on the one hand, Nikolai Petrovich Vagner's (1829–1907) antinihilist and largely antisemitic novel *Temnyi put'* (1890), while apparently informed by racist thinking, problematizes the idea that the so-called *juive fatale* is the only possible manifestation of the 'modern Jewess' and that Jewishness is always pernicious. While demonic female figures predominate throughout the novel, towards the end Vagner offers a traditional *belle juive* who through her death may contribute to the redemption of the Jews and the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles. By contrast, Vera Ivanovna Kryzhanovskaia (1857–1924) presents her Jewish female characters as racially determined agents of the anti-Christ. While Vagner creates a type of demonic Jewess who shares some features and goals with Jewish males but who has distinct characteristics determined by her sex, Kryzhanovskaia's extreme antisemitism blurs gender distinctions in her Jews. I conclude that these writers use the Jewess to promulgate antisemitism and hatred of the phenomenon of the 'new woman', but also to promote an opposing construct of Christian or Russian national self-definition and femininity.

The study focuses on non-Jewish Russian writers in order to establish in what ways the Jewess was seen from the outside, and in order to make direct comparisons with Gentile Russian writers' portrayals of non-Jewish women and of male Jews. Including within the examination a large number of works from the large body of Russian-language literature by Jews portraying Jewish women would have entailed

sacrificing the range and analytical depth of the study of Russian writers, and meant that this first stage in the study of Jewish women in Russian literature as a whole was inadequately accomplished. Future research can study the same phenomena in Jewish-penned Russian literature and use the present study for comparison. My final chapter represents a first step towards the accomplishment of this broader picture. It is dedicated to two of the most prominent Russian-Jewish writers in the late tsarist period: Semen Akimovich An-skii (real name: Shloime Zeinvil Rapoport, 1863–1920) and David Iakovlevich Aizman (1869–1922). Semen Solomonovich Iushkevich (1868–1927) is also covered in less depth. There is thus a symmetry in the structure of the thesis. The final chapter is the mirror-image of the first, exploring major Russian-Jewish writers to complement the analysis of their non-Jewish counterparts in the first chapter.

The two writers portray their Jewish women as at the forefront of the revolutionary movement, dedicating themselves to the fight to liberate and secure social justice for all the nations in the Empire. An-skii's portrayal stands out from the others examined in this thesis, being almost entirely bereft of the sexualization, victimization and demonization that beset many of the cliché-ridden nineteenth-century works depicting Jewish women. The thesis concludes that Russian-language writers on the whole create an image of the Jewish woman not as the ultimate 'Other' to the Russian but all the same as occupying a position within society and as possessing qualities that distinguished her from male Jews and from women of other nationalities. Accordingly, she is shown to occupy a unique position in Russia's present and destiny. Yet frequently her potential to play a role in creating a juster future is thwarted by others, both Russians and Jews, such that through the figure of the Jewess these writers criticize various aspects of late tsarist society.

## Primary Sources

For the texts by Chekhov and Kuprin in Chapter One, I have been able to use authoritative scholarly editions.<sup>196</sup> However, in the case of texts by the less well-known writers in Chapters Two to Four no scholarly editions are available, and access to material has involved both original publications and some republications. Although Krestovskii's collected works were published after his death,<sup>197</sup> I was unable to track

<sup>196</sup> The following sets of collected works will be used: A. P. Chekhov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 30 vols (Moscow, 1974–83); and A. I. Kuprin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 6 vols (Moscow, 1957–58).

<sup>197</sup> V. V. Krestovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by Iu. L. Elets, 8 vols (St Petersburg, 1899–1905).

down an intact edition. *Zhid idet*'s reactionary and blatantly antisemitic ideology ensured that it was not republished during the Soviet period. However, the trilogy is among a number of Krestovskii's works that have been republished in an uncensored form in post-Soviet period, and it is this edition of the work that I have used in my study.<sup>198</sup> In the absence of a scholarly edition of Chirikov's *Evrei*, I have used an early uncensored edition published in Munich.<sup>199</sup> I have used first publications of Vagner's *Temnyi put'*,<sup>200</sup> Aizman's *Ternovyi kust*<sup>201</sup> and An-skii's *V novom rusle*.<sup>202</sup> *Temnyi put'* has never been republished, but there was a spate of republications of Vagner's children's stories at the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>203</sup> Although *Ternovyi kust* was republished in a collection of plays by the Znanie group of publishers in the 1960s,<sup>204</sup> it has not been republished in the post-Soviet period. However, a collection of prose works by Aizman was published in Jerusalem in 1991.<sup>205</sup> For Kryzhanovskaia's *Mertvaia petlia*, I use an early publication of the novel.<sup>206</sup> In the post-Soviet period Kryzhanovskaia's works appear to be enjoying a revival within far-right Russian Orthodox circles, as well as among devotees of romance and science-fiction.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> V. V. Krestovskii, *T'ma egipetskaia. Tamara Bendavid. Torzhestvo Vaala. Dedy* (Moscow, 1993), 2 vols.

<sup>199</sup> E. N. Chirikov, *Evrei* (Munich, 1910).

<sup>200</sup> N. P. Vagner, *Temnyi put'*, 2 vols (St Petersburg, 1890).

<sup>201</sup> D. Ia. Aizman, *Ternovyi kust* (Berlin, 1907).

<sup>202</sup> S. An-skii, *V novom rusle*, in *Novye veianiiia: Pervyi evreiskii sbornik*, ed. by Shmi (Moscow, 1907), pp. 33–210.

<sup>203</sup> See, for example, N. P. Vagner, *Skazki Kota-Murlyki*, comp. by V. A. Shirokova (Moscow, 1991).

<sup>204</sup> David Aizman, *Ternovyi kust*, in *Dramaturgiia Znaniia: sbornik p'es*, comp. by Vadim N. Chuvakov (Moscow, 1964), pp. 498–574.

<sup>205</sup> D. Aizman, *Krovavyi razliv i drugie proizvedeniia*, comp. by M. Vainshtein (Jerusalem, 1990).

<sup>206</sup> V. I. Kryzhanovskaia, *Mertvaia petlia*, in Kryzhanovskaia, *Novyi vek. Sbornik povestei i rasskazov* (St Petersburg, 1916), pp. 103–277.

<sup>207</sup> For a recent republication of *Mertvaia petlia*, together with two other antisemitic works, see I. V. Rochester (pseudonym), *Spasenie. Trilogiia: roman, son v osenniu noch' i skaz*, comp. by V. P. Koval'kov (Moscow, 2004). Republications of other works portraying Jews include *Mest' evreia*, first published in 1893 (Simferopol, 1993).

## Chapter One

### The Jewish Feminine in Chekhov's 'Tina' and Kuprin's 'Zhidovka'

#### 1. Introduction

The Introduction to the thesis identified the principal typical features of Jewish women in Russian literature, such as beauty, a frequently tragic fate, passion (often presented as sultriness), attachment to their nation, malleability and a capacity for love and self-sacrifice. The two short stories on which this chapter focuses, Chekhov's 'Tina' (1886) and Kuprin's 'Zhidovka' (1904), go beyond merely repeating a selection of these clichés. They problematize some of them and touch upon, with a complexity not found in many portrayals of Jewish women, such themes as race, the moral problematics of sexuality and the significance of the Jewish woman in Jewish history. The protagonists in both stories are drawn to the Jewess's physical features and to those features that make her distinctly Jewish. The two writers' Jewesses make for a fruitful contrast as types: while Kuprin's Jewess is a traditional Jewish wife to an inn-keeper, Chekhov's is a partly assimilated independent woman managing a business on her own who defies conventional morality. While Kuprin's Jewess is readily identifiable as a variant of the traditional *belle juive*, Chekhov's departs from such archetypes and constitutes a more negative type of Jewess whose counterparts in West European literature had only acquired a relative prominence recently. This chapter explores such matters as what makes the Jewess feminine and Jewish according to these works, and how her sexuality and features identified as racial contribute to the texts' exploration of Jewish thematics. Analysing the stories in the first chapter of the thesis allows us to establish how two representatives of mainstream, classic Russian literature portrayed the Jewess before examining in a comparative perspective in later chapters how less well-known writers incorporated the figure of the Jewess into longer works of fiction.

## 2. Chekhov, 'Tina'

### Chekhov's Racially Marked Jews

Mondry finds that Chekhov in works from the late 1880s depicts some of his Jewish characters, both male and female, as possessing as a result of their racial makeup unique physical, psychological and moral characteristics. These traits mark them as the Other to the Russian, render them members of a prototypically genetically flawed race susceptible to ill health and pathology, and, because of their biological origin, cannot be erased by conversion to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> For example, the Jewish convert of his short story 'Perekati-pole' (1887) exhibits consumption and a nervous disorder, while the members of the Jewish family of his novella *Step'* (1888) are afflicted with 'physical problems, indefinite sexualities and psychological disorders, including madness'.<sup>2</sup> The mother, Roza, is fat and produces abundant offspring, yet they are ill and she lacks basic hygiene. She is the epitome of the overbearing and anxious mother, to the point of appearing rather insane. For example, she tries to force-feed a Russian child, Egorushka, who is visiting. When Roza finds out that his mother has no other children (Egorushka is being taken away from home to study at school), she sighs and lifts her eyes up, exclaiming: 'Бедная маменьке, бедная маменьке! Как же она будет скучать и рыдать!'<sup>3</sup> For all her devotion to her children, Roza neglects basic hygiene.

Chekhov does not consistently and in all respects portray Jews as completely 'other' to Russians, and Safran finds in Chekhov's works a more problematized depiction of Jewish difference. For example, she argues that, although the Jewish male convert of Chekhov's short story 'Perekati-pole' (1887) does possess the negative Judas-like characteristic of inconstancy, which contemporaries considered a Jewish trait, Chekhov attributes this feature to other inhabitants of the Empire as well.<sup>4</sup> Writing of his depictions of Jews as a whole, Safran contends that 'his depictions of Jews dispute not just the stereotypes but the entire notion of literary types'.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, 'more than any of his contemporaries, he represents Jewish and non-Jewish identities in the Russian Empire as equally mutable, permutable, approximate, and relative'.<sup>6</sup> Even though, as Mondry has found, Chekhov's Jewish characters do possess fixed racial

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<sup>1</sup> Mondry, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 44–46.

<sup>3</sup> A. P. Chekhov, *Step'*, in Chekhov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 30 vols (Moscow, 1974–83) (hereafter Chekhov, *PSSP*), *Sochinenia*: VII (1977), pp. 13–104 (p. 38).

<sup>4</sup> Safran, pp. 167–75.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

features, their non-physical characteristics can be varied and subject to change. For example, Solomon of *Step'* goes against the Jewish stereotype of greediness by burning his inheritance, yet this act is portrayed as caused by his ‘Jewish’ madness, and his body exhibits quintessentially Jewish features. While Safran finds Chekhov’s depiction of Jewish mutability positive and an indication of their closeness to humanity as a whole, Mondry views it as another trait identified as peculiar to what was considered the Jewish ‘race’: ‘The Jewish body is thus presented as one that can imitate but at the same time paradoxically always remains the same’.<sup>7</sup>

Probably out of all of Chekhov’s Jewish characters the one who least adheres to negative stereotypes is the Jewess of his play *Ivanov* (1886–89). In the work, the landowner Ivanov is suffering a crisis of the soul and growing self-hatred as a result of, among other things, impoverishment, overwork, and guilt at having fallen out of love with his wife, the Jewess Anna Petrovna (née Sara Abramson), who has tuberculosis. In Act Two, Anna, distraught at Ivanov leaving her every evening for their neighbours, follows him there, and sees the daughter Sasha kissing him. At the end of Act Three, a barrage of accusations from Anna, including that he married her only for her money, provokes Ivanov to call her a *zhidovka* and reveal what the local doctor had kept secret from her: her impending death. He ends the act sobbing, ‘Как я виноват! Боже, как я виноват!’<sup>8</sup> Act Four takes place a year later, after Anna’s death, on Ivanov and Sasha’s intended wedding day. Unable to convince Sasha to cancel the wedding, Ivanov shoots himself.

From one point of view, Anna is a quadruple victim: of her family, who have rejected her completely because of her conversion and her marriage to a Gentile; of her husband, who neglects her and whom she and other characters accuse of marrying her for her money; of some members of their society, who are prejudiced against her Jewishness; and of her Jewish biology. Mondry demonstrates that Anna’s role in the play is defined by her illness, which, given Chekhov’s frequent association of Jews with illnesses, she attributes to her Jewishness.<sup>9</sup> From this point of view, Anna is a typical Jewish female victim of her Jewishness similar to Turgenev’s Susanna. However, Safran argues that ‘Chekhov signals his rejection of the paradigm of the Jew as victim or victimizer by assigning stereotypically Jewish traits to various characters in the

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> Chekhov, *Ivanov*, in Chekhov, *PSSP, Sochineniya*: XI (1978), pp. 217–92 (p. 270).

<sup>9</sup> Mondry, p. 44. The importance of Anna’s dying is also attested to by the fact that women do not die in Chekhov’s other plays. See Donald Rayfield, *Chekhov: The Evolution of His Art* (London, 1975), p. 103.

play'.<sup>10</sup> First, it is far from certain that Ivanov married her for her money, consequently, she may not fit the stereotype of the exploited Jewess; moreover, she lost her dowry because she converted and married a Gentile. Second, Ivanov is presented as a victim himself.<sup>11</sup> Safran concludes that the play has the effect on the audience of preventing it from identifying characters as simply guilty or simply innocent.<sup>12</sup> She reveals the ambiguities in the text, but exaggerates the degree to which it downplays Anna's victimhood. While indeed Chekhov does not provide black and white characterizations, the refusal or inability of Ivanov to reciprocate Anna's devoted, self-sacrificing love but only to scorn her, cannot but create the impression of her victimhood; moreover, the nature of Ivanov's and other characters' abuse, and the connections of Anna's illness with Jewishness, ensure that her status is understood in terms of her as a Jewess attempting to adapt. A problematic element of Anna's portrayal is that, unlike Turgenev's Susanna, she is a secondary character, upstaged by Ivanov. Consequently, her suffering is marginalized. Indeed, Ivanov's guilt at her plight gains greater prominence than her suffering itself.

As with Turgenev's Susanna, one's impression is that it is Gentile society that prevents her from adapting. For example, although she speaks Russian without an accent and her behaviour does not stand out as non-Russian, other characters imitate a Jewish accent in order to mock her, suggesting that signs of Jewishness are perceived even in their actual absence.<sup>13</sup> All the same, Anna's 'Jewish' illness plays a similar role to the Jewish curse that plagues Susanna, suggesting that, even when a Jewess not only adapts to Russian society but even displays great virtues, there is some unconquerable force damning her. Mondry therefore stands out among scholars in identifying this Jewish feature; many scholars have been unable to find anything Jewish about Anna.<sup>14</sup>

### **Chekhov's Jewish *Femme Fatale***

There can be no doubt about the Jewishness of the Jewess Chekhov portrays in his infamous short story 'Tina' (1886). The work begins with the protagonist lieutenant Sokol'skii visiting the house of the recently deceased vodka factory-owner Rotshtein in order to collect a debt owed to his cousin, Kriukov; Sokol'skii intends to use the money to marry. Rotshtein's daughter Susanna apologizes for receiving Sokol'skii in her

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<sup>10</sup> Safran, p. 178.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>13</sup> *Ivanov*, p. 231.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Levitina, *Russkii teatr i evrei*, I, p. 85.

bedroom, complaining of having had a migraine yesterday and needing to rest. In contrast to most Jewish women in Russian literature, she is not beautiful, but as the meeting progresses Sokol'skii finds her more and more attractive. She is a character of intriguing paradoxes. She is a convert to Russian Orthodoxy, but, for all her assertions to the contrary, speaks Russian with a distinctly Jewish accent; she declares that she loves both the Russian and Jewish nations, while despising the latter's passion for profit. However, she asserts that the faults of Jewry, and consequently the reasons for hostility against them, lie in their women. Whenever Susanna is reminded that she is a woman, her self-love turns into self-hatred; she believes that women are stupid and dominate men. Susanna suddenly grabs the IOU. A fight ensues, from which Susanna emerges victorious. Explaining that she has her own ways of looking at things, she claims to be unmoved by his protestations that it is not his money, but his cousin's, and that he needs it to get married. Sokol'skii becomes more brazen in response to Susanna's impudence, and as he recalls rumours of her free way of life.

When Sokol'skii later explains to Kriukov that, rather than obtaining the money from Susanna he slept with her, he refers namely to the Jewess's impudence as the means by which she seduced him. Kriukov, who is married with children, rebukes his cousin for his shameful behaviour and vows to get the IOU from Susanna. However, when he returns it transpires that he, too, failed to obtain the IOU and has spent the night with her.

A week after Kriukov's encounter, Sokol'skii again visits Susanna. Another week later, Kriukov begins to get fed up with family life and decides to do the same, excusing his behaviour as a response to the need to do something once a month that one does not do every day, in order to 'freshen oneself up', comparing Susanna to an alcoholic drink. When he arrives at Susanna's, he finds that she is entertaining various of his own respected acquaintances. Kriukov and Sokol'skii feel ashamed of themselves when they catch sight of one another. Sokol'skii seems to have left his fiancée and his career in the army to live with Susanna, but claims to have come there only to say goodbye. Full of shame, Kriukov leaves without saying a word.

### **The Jewess as the 'Other': Susanna as a Site of Disease, Repulsion and Desire**

Chekhov marks his Jewess as distinctly Jewish in physical appearance by having Sokol'skii on his first sight of her see only her large nose and large dark eye.<sup>15</sup> While she possesses the large dark eyes of the *belle juive*, Chekhov goes against the stereotype

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<sup>15</sup> Chekhov, 'Tina', in Chekhov, *PSSP, Sochineniia*: V (1976), pp. 361–78 (p. 362).

of the typical Jewess's beauty by presenting her as ill.<sup>16</sup> However, there is an echo of another trend in the portrayal of Jewish women in Russian literature: the depiction of them as dirty and freakish. Once Sokol'skii is able to see her whole face, he notices that it is white and thin and that her ears and nose seem dead.<sup>17</sup> This, together with the fact that her features somehow do not go together in Sokol'skii's view, associates Susanna with the unnatural. She is uncanny in appearing to be between life and death. One may relate this feature to the fact that she seems to give men life-affirming pleasure, but actually brings death – to their self-control and family life.

Mondry finds various features of Susanna's physical appearance and behaviour that reflect the contemporary scientific belief that Jews suffered from degeneracy because of an unhealthy lifestyle and inbreeding. This was supposedly manifested in, among other things, a predisposition to nervous diseases.<sup>18</sup> The reader may be encouraged to interpret Sokol'kii's comment 'Бледная немочь. [...] Вероятно, нервна, как индюшка',<sup>19</sup> as indicating his perception of Susanna as suffering from hysteria, a psychological problem frequently ascribed to Jews during the period and considered to result from their alleged sexual excess.<sup>20</sup> Susanna's promiscuity may well have resulted in her contracting syphilis or some other venereal disease, which, in the perception of contemporary society, would explain her illness.<sup>21</sup> Her Jewishness is thus linked to her diseased, infectious sexuality. Jewish sexuality at the time was widely seen as primitive and deviant.<sup>22</sup> Safran describes Susanna's disease as 'moral and physical, as manifested in [her] body and [her] actions'.<sup>23</sup> Her illness represents both a symbolic threat (to men's family lives) and a literal threat (to their physical and psychological health).

As Makolkin notes, Susanna, despite her sick appearance, does have attractive features such as a beautiful white hand and her youth.<sup>24</sup> However, she is subversive in the nature of her attractiveness: she attracts partly through deceit and artifice. For

<sup>16</sup> The seductive, infectious Jewess who, unlike Chekhov's Susanna, gives little or no warning to her potential lovers through her appearance that she might infect them (typically with a venereal disease) is a common character in Russian literature of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. See, for example, Vagner's *Temnyi put'* (discussed in Chapter 3), Garin-Mikhailovskii's *Studenty* (1895) and P. N. Krasnov's 'Dve smerti' (1917).

<sup>17</sup> 'Tina', p. 366.

<sup>18</sup> Mondry, p. 55.

<sup>19</sup> 'Tina', p. 208.

<sup>20</sup> Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York and London, 1991), p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> On the association of Jews and Jewish women with syphilis see Gilman, 'Salome'.

<sup>22</sup> Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1985), p. 213.

<sup>23</sup> Safran, p. 165.

<sup>24</sup> Makolkin, p. 139.

example, she uses jasmine to cover the smell of death in the house – although she claims that it is her father's medicine that smells, one wonders if it is not the smell of her own illness peculiar to her race. Safran finds that Susanna and Sokol'skii share a 'pleasure in the perverse rather than the "pure" and healthy', contrasting Sokol'skii's initial feeling of sickness at the smell of jasmine in Susanna's house with his later attraction towards it.<sup>25</sup> Mondry demonstrates that the smell in Susanna's house is 'inescapably *foetor Judaicus*, but it is not only a marker of her Jewish body, but also a sign of her diseased psyche, her own olfactory mania'.<sup>26</sup> The scent of jasmine, which seems to emanate from Susanna's bed and shoes, not only masks smells, it also throws Sokol'skii into confusion, sickens him and attracts him.<sup>27</sup> The jasmine therefore embodies the poisonous nature of Susanna's attractiveness and her ability to attract through artificiality, associating these qualities with her Jewishness.

### **The Masculinity of the Jewish Feminine**

This deceptive mode of attracting brings Susanna closer to the stereotypical Jewish man, who depended on trickery and manipulation to get by in life. Sokol'skii explains to Kriukov that Susanna does not 'take' men through beauty or intelligence, but through impudence and cynicism.<sup>28</sup> Susanna has other qualities considered masculine such as assertiveness and aggressiveness, and her whole environment is presented as lacking femininity.<sup>29</sup> 'Tina' therefore reduces the traditionally strong distinctions in European literature between Jewish men and Jewish women: the Jewess becomes physically and morally more similar to the male Jew. Instead of the Jewess's traditional spiritual and moral supremacy over Jewish men and, to some extent, over Gentiles, Chekhov's Jewess is spiritually and morally empty. Instead of the idealistic spiritual concerns of the typical *belle juive*, physical needs and the desire to manipulate motivate her actions. However, this chapter argues that all the same Susanna does display positive characteristics that identify her as fully human rather than a parasite, such as wit and a genuine desire for human company; moreover, the Russian characters prove themselves the equal to most of her less commendable characteristics.

Susanna claims that, although she loves herself, she begins to hate herself when she is reminded that she is a woman. She suggests that she is a man in a woman's body:

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<sup>25</sup> Safran, p. 165.

<sup>26</sup> Mondry, p. 52.

<sup>27</sup> 'Tina', pp. 365, 369, 376.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

“Женщина... – усмехнулась Сусанна. – Разве я виновата, что бог послал мне такую оболочку?”<sup>30</sup> Susanna’s misogyny and masculinity indirectly claim the reader’s sympathy because one can see them as a reaction against Gentile society’s triple pushing her to the outside of society – as a woman, as a Jew, and as a Jewess, given the particularly negative preconceptions Jewish women had accrued by the 1880s. Rachel Varnhagen has been described as possessing an identity that was ‘doubly negative: shame for her Jewish birth was rooted in shame for her sex. To be a woman was to be on the margin of society – ill-born’.<sup>31</sup> Unable to counter prejudice in Gentile society against her sex, race and the fact that she is a Jewess, Susanna is forced to resort to adopting a masculine way of dealing with life. Her misogyny covers her Jewish self-hatred, both qualities inevitably arising in the prejudiced environment in which she grows up. In this light, her sick appearance becomes a sign of her having been ‘ill-born’, a sign not of her actual dangerous infectiousness but of her always being seen as an outcast by virtue of her birth regardless of what she might do, hence Sokol’skii’s immediate prejudice against her Jewish appearance. Just as she cannot escape her female body or her Jewish looks, she cannot escape the prejudice of those amongst whom she finds herself.

One might imagine that Susanna’s masculinity might threaten that of her lovers. However, if anything she flatters it by providing the men with another sexual partner: the dominant negative emotion of her lovers appears to be shame, not hurt male pride. She is less of a menace to masculinity than to femininity, which, after all, is the essence she despises in herself: it is the men’s wives and fiancées whom she humiliates, making them scared that she might ‘make scenes’ in their presence.<sup>32</sup> In this connection, Mosse notes that in nineteenth-century Berlin Jewesses playing a central role in masculine society, which was seen as off limits to Christian women, were ‘not seen as challenging masculine privilege’ because ‘The so-called masculine virtues such women possessed were granted to them as outsiders’.<sup>33</sup> Susanna’s status as an outsider gives the men of ‘Tina’ the illusion that she poses less of a threat than she does.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>31</sup> Birgit Pelzer, ‘Le vent du Nord est mon plus grand ennemi’, *Cahiers du GRIF*, 33 (1986), 126–41 (p. 134). Quoted in Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. by Rosemary Morris (Cambridge, 1993), p. 175.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Tina’, p. 364.

<sup>33</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York, 1996), p. 76.

### **The Jewess as ‘Too Much Like Us’: Susanna as a Force of Subversion and Fear**

The wide variety of interpretations that ‘Tina’ has provoked since its publication indicates the ambiguity with which Chekhov portrays his Jewess. My analysis expands upon the work of previous scholars who have found in Susanna an ambiguous character whose positive aspects include her standing out from many non-Jewish women in other works by Chekhov through her courage and intelligence, and from Russian bourgeois society as a whole through her honesty and lack of hypocrisy. For example, Rayfield praises ‘the intensity and the originality of the portrait of Susanna, whose sexuality emerges in her masculine bravado, in imagery that is simultaneously repellent and alluring’.<sup>34</sup> Hingley comments: ‘Depraved indeed, but no monster of depravity, Chekhov’s Susanna is among his most effective character studies of the period’.<sup>35</sup>

Mondry contends that ‘Tina’ ‘reflects the combination of biological stereotypes and political antisemitism that was propagated by [Novoe vremia]’.<sup>36</sup> While there is much truth in Mondry’s statement, one also sees in the story a situation similar to what Rosenshield observes with Jews in *Taras Bul’ba*: by exhausting Jewish (and female) stereotypes, Chekhov subverts and deconstructs them. ‘Tina’ gives the impression that they are partly based on fact, but partly motivated by Gentiles’ and men’s desires to project their faults onto the Other. Chekhov gives Susanna all the negative attributes of Jews and Jewesses, and yet the end result is ambiguous:

Susanna Moiseevna is a villain by definition. As a Jewess, she carries the traditional stigma of contempt, and as a forger, she is supposed to provoke the reaction of strict condemnation. None of this happens; in fact, what the reader observes is a strange authorial position [...] Chekhov’s Susanna Moiseevna is an absolute antithesis to his other female characters. Despite the fact that the character is a woman, she is endowed with enormous charm, intelligence, wit and, what is most unusual, she is treated with humour, warmth and empathy.<sup>37</sup>

The work is shot through with humour, much of it provided by the quick-witted eccentric Jewish vamp. While in Russia male Jews were often the object of ridicule, Susanna does not become a victim of humour but rather deploys it herself to great

<sup>34</sup> Donald Rayfield, *Chekhov: The Evolution of His Art* (London, 1975), p. 54.

<sup>35</sup> Ronald Hingley, *A New Life of Anton Chekhov* (London, 1976), p. 85.

<sup>36</sup> Henrietta Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies: Constructing the Jew in Russian Culture Since the 1880s* (Boston, 2009), p. 55.

<sup>37</sup> Makolkin, p. 138.

effect. She also reverses the typical position of the *belle juive* as a victim of Gentile society by becoming its victimizer. However, she does so in a manner that not only upholds the stereotype of Jewish exploitativeness, but also reveals the proneness of Russians to vice: she merely manipulates the existing weaknesses of the men she seduces.

Makolkin perceives Susanna as revealing the immorality and hypocrisy of Gentiles through her behaviour: she openly commits sins that Gentiles also commit but conceal.<sup>38</sup> On this level, Gentiles can be seen as morally inferior to Susanna, especially as they not only share the negative behaviour of Jews, but also persecute Jews for that behaviour. Indeed, in what she views as Chekhov's defence of Susanna, Makolkin sees a departure from stereotypes: 'The author leaves the mythical territory of the stereotype and cautiously steps into the unexpected world of unpopular thinking.'<sup>39</sup> By forcing the reader to face the hypocrisy of stereotyping, Susanna undermines it. Moreover, the very individuality and allusiveness of Susanna's character, frequently commented upon by the other characters, and the concomitant difficulty of assigning her to pre-given categories, make her subversive in relation to stereotypes. Makolkin demonstrates the ease with which Susanna adopts and switches preconceived roles: one moment she spouts misogynist comments like a man, betraying her sex, the next moment she denounces Gentile hatred of Jews, defending her nation.<sup>40</sup>

Susanna reveals to her lovers hidden aspects of their own sexuality and makes them understand that men can be attracted not only by conventional feminine attributes such as physical beauty, but also by qualities such as cynicism and boldness (stigmatized through association with the harlot) as well as, despite what Sokol'skii says to the contrary, intelligence, a feature that due to prevailing sexist attitudes was not usually associated with women or found attractive in them. She combines these three qualities in her subversive wit, which plays on Jewish stereotypes, simultaneously confirming and subverting them, while constituting an original feature of the Jewess. For example, expressing stereotypical affection towards a briefcase that she claims contains a quarter of her fortune ('Посмотрите, какой он пузатенький!'), she humorously indirectly reminds Kriukov and the reader that they, too, covet money and can be just as immoral in their means of obtaining it as Jews: 'Ведь вы меня не придушите?'<sup>41</sup> Kriukov's reaction, laughing and thinking 'А она славная!',

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 142–43.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>41</sup> 'Tina', p. 367.

demonstrates that, although Susanna does attract partly through stereotypically Jewish manipulation, she also attracts through her intelligence, wit and unique personality, which cannot be reduced to a set of pre-existing stereotypes. Indeed, it is partly through these qualities that, as Safran asserts, Susanna ‘explicitly and implicitly [...] challenges the other characters’ assumptions, embodying confusion about sexual, ethnic, and even species identities’.<sup>42</sup> Safran refers to Susanna’s simultaneous self-love and love of Jews and her self-hate, directed at her womanhood, particularly her Jewish womanhood and Jews’ love of profit. She concludes that Sokol’skii’s ‘inability to assign her a single, stable definition makes her a symbol of mutation and assimilation in all its forms’.<sup>43</sup>

In general, the story does not present Susanna in terms of the extremes of attractiveness or repulsiveness in which scholars have tended to evaluate the work. Susanna is ultimately neither wholly attractive, like the *belle juive*, nor wholly repulsive, like the stereotypical male Jew, as encapsulated in one of Sokol’skii’s first reactions to her: ‘Она не понравилась ему, хотя и не показалась некрасивой’.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, it is namely features identified as Jewish that both attract and repel Sokol’skii. For example, on the one hand, he likes the manner in which Susanna burrs – a feature of many Jews’ pronunciation of Russian.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, he is prejudiced against non-Russian faces.<sup>46</sup> Chekhov therefore alerts the reader to Russians’ distorting prejudice in their evaluation of the ‘Jewish feminine’. While his depiction of the Jewess is informed by what was considered at the time to be scientific discourse, Chekhov constantly highlights the role of preconceived ideas and myths in his Russian characters’ reaction to Susanna’s looks. The simultaneous attraction and repulsion and the influence of stereotypes in the evaluation of the Jewess may be related to Russians’ attitude towards Jews in general, as may Susanna’s own ambiguous attitude to her Jewishness. Prejudice may hide the fact that Russians unconsciously find something attractive in Jews, including in features normally dismissed as repulsive.

Rayfield sees the title as referring not to a ‘mire’ particular to the Jewess into which she lures her victims, but to ‘sexuality itself, on which Chekhov was to show a more and more enigmatic ambiguity’.<sup>47</sup> In ‘Tina’, Chekhov plays with this idea to question the value of assigning culpability: the males in the story may be just as much

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<sup>42</sup> Safran, p. 160.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Tina’, p. 366.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>47</sup> Donald Rayfield, *Understanding Chekhov: A Critical Study of Chekhov’s Prose and Drama* (Madison, WI, 1999), p. 38.

the seducers as the seduced, and they are at least as morally wrong for submitting to the Jewess's charms. Indeed, when Chekhov reacted to a scathing letter from the children's writer Mariia Kiseleva that described the work as a 'manure pile', he defended it as fulfilling the duty of art to portray human nature in all its ugliness.<sup>48</sup> He did not blame a particular national group or sex for being more responsible than other groups for the existence of that quality. However, if the story criticizes anyone, it is the Russian males: after all, the Jewess, because of the prevalence of prejudice, had very limited opportunities for social interaction; moreover, it is the men, not she, who are betrothed or married. Hence the end of the story emphasizes not the powerful seductiveness of Susanna or the helplessness of her 'victims', but the cousins' shame. As Susanna points out, they do not even need the money she takes from them, and would only waste it on their wives and fiancées. The uncomfortable truth that scholars have found Susanna to reveal is the ease with which a supposedly respectable man will repeatedly betray his beloved for the company of an engaging woman and sexual pleasure. Susanna's nationality may be important only insofar as it may allow the men to give themselves the illusion that with her they are operating in a different moral sphere, where the moral conventions of their own social group do not apply.

While she mocks herself as a woman, a Jew and as a Jewess, it is ultimately the Russian characters themselves, then, who make fools of Russians and Gentiles through their behaviour. In Susanna, Chekhov creates a unique Jewish woman in Russian literature. He does not make her conform to a particular ideological viewpoint or to a certain category such as Madonna or the *femme fatale*. Unusually for women in general in Russian literature, Susanna is allowed to flourish as a character with her own idiosyncratic and, at best, amoral qualities without absolute condemnation. Although her character is based on stereotypes, it is also beyond these stereotypes.

Chekhov's Jewess embodies aspects of human nature that most people try to hide. She therefore has a universalizing quality in addition to her qualities specific to the Jewish female. As in the typical story of the *belle juive*, the Jewess brings the Jewish and Gentile worlds closer in a way that a male Jew would not be expected to do. The male Jew is typically portrayed as fawning over Gentiles and protesting his innocence when he is rightly accused of various transgressions (for example, Turgenev's Girshel'). Yet Susanna, for all her faults, is at least open about them. In this sense, she represents a kind of progressive woman and Jew, willing to recognize the faults of both groups, even

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<sup>48</sup> Letter of 14 January 1887 to M. V. Kiseleva, in Chekhov, *PSSP, Pis'ma*: II (1975), pp. 10–14.

if she does not intend to reform herself (and, in the case of her femininity, claims that she cannot).

Susanna is a provocative challenge both to the individual men in the story and their women and to Russian society as a whole. What ultimately stands out the most is not Susanna's racial Otherness, as pronounced as this is, but the manner in which she reveals the dullness of bourgeois society and the fragility of the veneer of decency that covers its base instincts. In her subversiveness and in her capacity to weaken men's will and to scare off women, Susanna is a source of fear as well as admiration. However, it is not some mysterious demonic power that draws the men to Susanna. Chekhov mocks the cousins' claims to themselves and to each other that it is principally the smell of jasmine that attracts them forcefully to Susanna, emphasizing rather their boredom with family life. They have both simply experienced something more exciting than its monotony and want to experience it again, as expressed by Kriukov: “Раз в месяц надо освежать себя чем-нибудь... необыденным, — думал он, — чем-нибудь таким, что производило бы в застоявшемся организме хорошую встрепку... реакцию... Будь то хоть выпивка, хоть... Сусанна. Нельзя без этого.”<sup>49</sup> Both characters see Susanna as an escape from their mundane existence, and the guests in Susanna's house enjoy themselves, so there is a sense in which the sexuality of the Jewess is presented as a mere diversion. Tolstoy explains prosaically: ‘The mystery of her attraction is that in spite of her sins she is livelier and more exciting than anyone else around.’<sup>50</sup> Chapter Three, on the other hand, will demonstrate that some Russian writers took seriously the idea that Jews posed a threat to Russian morality, economic well-being, political autonomy and even biological survival with the help of the enslaving seductiveness of their women. Susanna embodies the threat that Europeans perceived from the combination of Jewish sexual predatoriness and Jewish domination of the economy.<sup>51</sup> Gilman has demonstrated the masculinization of the figure of the Jewess in perceptions of Sarah Bernhardt, who was deemed ‘mannish in her demand for control over the world’.<sup>52</sup> However, Susanna's ‘domination’ takes place on such a small scale, with so little resistance from her purported victims, and in a manner so suffused with humour and irony that it questions the whole idea of Jewish female nefariousness. Moreover, her ‘mire’ cannot be so powerful: Kriukov manages to leave it at the end of

<sup>49</sup> ‘Tina’, p. 376.

<sup>50</sup> See Tolstoy, ‘From Susanna to Sarra’, p. 594.

<sup>51</sup> Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p. 120.

<sup>52</sup> Sander Gilman, ‘Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the “Modern Jewess”’, in *The German Quarterly*, 66 (1993), pp. 195–211 (p. 205).

the story through shame. Chekhov thus peddles the *Novoe vremia* line regarding Jews only to undermine it without rejecting it, through humour and through showing the ordinariness of the men's 'entrapment' by Susanna's sexuality.

Among the qualities that Llewellyn Smith identifies as characteristic of Chekhov's temptresses as a whole are a sexuality that entrals men and 'a vaguely alarming sense of evil about them'.<sup>53</sup> Yet Susanna's victims are not only bewitched by her sexuality but also by her charm. Moreover, she is not evil: she does not appear to set out deliberately to cause harm to others. Furthermore, Susanna is not even necessarily financially exploitative. Her refusal to pay or release the IOU may be motivated purely by the desire to seduce and trap Sokol'skii and Kriukov, not by the wish to keep the money. She shows no interest in pursuing her father's business, and scorns the world of finance and its jargon.<sup>54</sup> She claims to hate Jews' passion for profit, and to put enjoyment above all other considerations, explicitly contrasting this with Jews' renunciation of pleasure for the sake of prudence: 'Нужно жить и наслаждаться, а они боятся потратить лишнюю копейку.'<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Susanna does go against a major Jewish stereotype in Russian culture. While Jews were considered to abstain from alcohol while selling it to Russians and encouraging their addiction to it, Susanna herself indulges in the type of pleasure through which she apparently accumulates and maintains her wealth. Unlike the peddlers of alcohol, who avoid non-commercial relationships with Russians, Susanna seems to depend on both sexual and social relationships with them. Hospitable and generous, she regularly entertains large numbers of guests at her expense, and even invites Sokol'skii to live with her – this is hardly the behaviour of a typical Jewish miser. Moreover, while Susanna does effectively become a prostitute, the label is too limited for her, since her talents and what she offers men extend beyond the physical, and among the things that she gains from them money is probably the least important.

Susanna is a rare example in nineteenth-century Russian literature of a Jewish female survivor. Instead of allowing her illness and the ostracism she faces in society to reduce her to the typical miserable, suffering Jewess of Russian literature, Susanna takes advantage of all her assets. While Turgenev's Susanna had been ruined by being wrongly associated with prostitution, Susanna embraces all the negative stereotypes about Jewish women. While *Ivanov*'s Anna had suffered prejudice and neglect from

<sup>53</sup> Virginia Llewellyn Smith, *Anton Chekhov and the Lady with the Dog* (London, 1973), pp. 26–27.

<sup>54</sup> 'Tina', p. 363.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

many of those close to her despite being a loving, devoted wife, Susanna is more successful at adapting to a hostile environment: rather than trying to be the ‘saintly Jewess’ and only meeting with scorn and an unhappy marriage if she could manage to find a man willing to marry a Jewess at all, she tackles prejudice by confirming it to the utmost, and making the local men fall for her. While the women hate her, the men all grow fond of her: even if they harbour contempt, they do not only visit her for sex, but also for the company she creates from herself and the local men at her gatherings. Susanna is therefore a survivor: condemned like Anna to disease and prejudice, unlike Anna she extracts the most from life.

### 3. Kuprin, 'Zhidovka'

#### Kuprin's Male and Female Jews: A Mixture of the Strong and the Weak, and of the Idealistic and the Nefarious

Like Chekhov, Kuprin's oeuvre offers a range of Jewish characters who both embody and subvert stereotypes. Far from a consistent philosemitic, Kuprin in private letters to friends expressly not intended for publication accused Jews of being, among other things, maximally foreign and antipathetic to Russians, and of taking over Russian culture despite its being alien to them. In the most infamous letter, to F. D. Batiushkov and dated 1909, he went so far as to call for Jews' expulsion from Russia.<sup>56</sup>

In Kuprin's fiction, one often senses a mixture of sympathy and contempt in his depictions of Jews. For example, in his novella *Poedinok* (1905) two Jewish musicians in a brothel visited by some Russian officers are a source of mockery: 'Подпрапорщик Лбов гонялся по комнате за одним из музыкантов и изо всей силы колотил его бубном по голове. Еврей кричал быстро и непонятно и, озираясь назад с испугом, метался из угла в угол, подбиравая длинные фалды сюртука. Все смеялись.'<sup>57</sup> While the work condemns the Russian army's gratuitous violence, including against Jews, it also mocks Jewish cowardice. Far from cowardly, however, is the Jewish contrabandist Faibish of 'Trus' (1903), whose recklessly brave exploits create a local legend around him and are contrasted with the cowardice of his 'typical' Jewish partner in crime, Tsirel'man. The peace-loving Odessan pub musician of 'Gambrinus' (1907), Sashka, is no less brave than Faibish, although his bravery attaches itself to different values. Adored locally for his violin-playing, he stands by his moral and artistic values when he refuses to play patriotic tunes during the 1905 pogrom. After losing the ability to play the violin when his left arm is crippled by the police for his obstinacy in an antisemitic attack, he takes up flute-playing, embodying the story's last line: 'Человека можно искалечить, но искусство все перетерпит и все победит.'<sup>58</sup>

In his retelling of Song of Songs, 'Sulamif' (1908), Kuprin's biblical Jewess embodies the immortal power of true, self-sacrificing love, renouncing her life for her lover King Solomon by intercepting his would-be assassin's sword.<sup>59</sup> However, there is no hint of the canticle's allegorical significance within Jewish tradition, and arguably

<sup>56</sup> For the letter and commentary on it, see Levitina, *Russkii teatr i evrei*, II, pp. 174–95.

<sup>57</sup> A. I. Kuprin, *Poedinok*, in Kuprin, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh*, 6 vols (Moscow, 1957–58) (hereafter Kuprin, SS), III (1958), pp. 302–541 (p. 502).

<sup>58</sup> Kuprin, 'Gambrinus', in Kuprin, SS, IV (1958), pp. 156–83 (p. 183).

<sup>59</sup> A. I. Kuprin, 'Sulamif', in Kuprin, SS, IV, pp. 260–317 (p. 313).

erotic love gets the upper hand over spiritual love in the tale. Sulamif' ends up incarnating three of the clichés relating to Jewish women – their overpowering beauty, sensuality and devoted love – rather than developing a more nuanced portrayal of romantic love and of its link to the divine and Jewish history. Moreover, she becomes more beautiful in death,<sup>60</sup> suggesting that the qualities that the work is highlighting in her as the most valuable are her beauty and capacity for self-sacrifice; indeed, the text gives her few individual features, reducing her to the embodiment of these ideals.

The Jewish romantic relationships of Kuprin's novel on prostitution, *Iama* (1909–15), are free of the exalted exoticism of 'Sulamif'. By the late nineteenth century prostitution had established itself for many in the Empire as a Jewish profession.<sup>61</sup> Jews were disproportionately represented in procuring and brothelkeeping, with Jewish women constituting 70% of madams in the Pale of Settlement.<sup>62</sup> Jewish prostitutes were also large in number, but were not as prominent as Jewish brothelkeepers. Jewish involvement in prostitution became yet another antisemitic grievance, as well as confirming beliefs that Jews were 'by nature traffickers in flesh'.<sup>63</sup>

The Jewish prostitutes in *Iama* are shown as the ultimate victims. One of them, Son'ka Rul', was sold into the profession by her own mother because of poverty.<sup>64</sup> Son'ka does not even have the good looks required to guarantee a reasonable income: 'еврейка, с некрасивым темным лицом и чрезвычайно большим носом, за который она и получила свою кличку, но с такими прекрасными большими глазами, одновременно кроткими и печальными, горящими и влажными, какие среди женщин всего земного шара бывают только у евреек'.<sup>65</sup> On the one hand, Kuprin goes against the stereotype of the *belle juive*: here, what is at first glance an unattractive exterior hides a beautiful soul. On the other hand, this soul is represented traditionally by the stereotypical pair of beautiful dark eyes of the Jewess staring melancholically into the distance (although potential clients do not notice this asset). Krobb describes the typical *belle juive* of European literature as possessing eyes that 'are always said to be dark, deep, moist and full of a certain yearning: these characteristics can be

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>61</sup> See Laurie Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters: Prostitutes and their Regulation in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995), pp. 161–66.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>64</sup> Kuprin, *Iama*, in Kuprin, *SS*, V (1958), pp. 5–333 (p. 46). The fullest coverage of Jewish prostitution in pre-revolutionary Russian literature is provided by Iushkevich. Notable examples are his story 'Ita Gaine' (1902), play *V gorode* (1906) and novella *Ulitsa* (1911). In the latter two works, Jewish mothers send their daughters out onto the street to work as prostitutes.

<sup>65</sup> *Iama*, p. 35.

understood as erotic allusions (in terms of desire and desirability), but at the same time they signify the Jewess's longing for the world outside the restrictions of her Jewishness'.<sup>66</sup> The description of Son'ka reduces her sexual attractiveness, emphasizing instead the suffering that she undergoes as a result of her position. All the same, Kuprin marks her and, through identifying her features as uniquely Jewish, Jewish women in general as sexually available through adjectives such as 'meek', 'burning' and 'moist'. Jewish women in Kuprin's portrayal conform to Krobb's description of them as longing for both sensuality and something to end their perpetual suffering. Apart from in 'Sulamif', the Jewish men whom Kuprin portrays in sexual or romantic relationships with Jewish women tend to be weak and laughable, possessing stereotypically negative features. The Jew in love with Son'ka in *Jama* cannot afford to look after her and so has to experience the humiliation of waiting while she has sex with her clients when he visits her; he himself can only make love to her when he has the money to pay for it. While Kuprin emphasizes the great love that the Jew has for Son'ka, he gives both the lovers mockingly stereotypical features such as theatrical gestures, and portrays the man as having a misplaced fanaticism: he scolds her not only for living in a brothel, but also for not keeping Sabbath. Later in the novel the narrator suggests that the Jew's failure to take her from the brothel may be a result of typical 'Jewish' cowardice.<sup>67</sup>

Kuprin's Jewish procurer Gorizont has none of this Jew's reticence. He embodies a new male Jewish stereotype in Russian literature that is more developed in, for example, Kryzhanovskaia's works (see Chapter Three) – that of the attractive male Jew who possesses the dangerous sexual allure that was traditionally limited to the figure of the Jewess. The opposite in certain respects of the repulsive Jew of much nineteenth-century Russian literature but still possessing their garrulousness, cunning and ingratiating manner, Gorizont is able not only to tempt people into buying things from him (including women) in accordance with the traditional stereotype of the male Jew, but also to exploit his good looks and charm. He lures women of various nationalities and ethnicities into prostitution through making them fall in love with him and manipulating them (which he does with ease), or enticing them with the false promise of lucrative, legitimate work. There is even a suggestion that he is a paedophile or attempts to lure young girls into prostitution. One of his latest victims is his new wife, the Jewess Sara. She is presented as naive, submissive and totally devoted, as well as undemanding, beaming with gratitude at Gorizont's mere offer of food, despite the

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<sup>66</sup> Krobb, 'La Belle Juive', p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Jama*, p. 134.

fact that he ignores her most of the time. Again, Kuprin highlights the Jewish particularity of her looks: ‘лицо ее было так прекрасно, как бывают только прекрасны лица у молодых влюбленных еврейских девушек’.<sup>68</sup> Gorizont reduces marriage to a money-earner and his wife’s ethnic beauty to a commodity. Frequent marriage ensures him a constant income from dowries. Indeed, profit and the thrill of power are the principal benefits he obtains from Sara, since he is a misogynist and is indifferent to sex despite his prowess.

However, flair at exploitative, inhumane business is not limited to male Jews in the work. Many of the brothels mentioned in the novel are run by Jewish madams. One of them, Anna Markovna Shoibes, is a former prostitute, suggesting that some of these apparently pitiful Jewish prostitutes may also turn the tables. Cassiday and Rouhi view her as realizing ‘the nineteenth-century stereotype of a money-grubbing Jewish woman, no longer sexually attractive’.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, her appearance is the horrendous opposite of the *belle juive* and accords to the type of repulsive Jewess identified in the Introduction: ‘Она очень мала ростом, но кругло-толста [...] глаза у нее блекло-голубые, девичьи, даже детские, но рот старческий, с отвисшей бессильно, мокрой нижней малиновой губой.’<sup>70</sup> However, the striking thing about Shoibes is that she all the same conforms to the stereotype of Jewish parents as devoted to their children, spending most of her profits on spoiling and educating her daughter Bertochna, from whom she hides the true source of her enviable life. Gorizont, too, shows a similar tendency to ‘look after his own’, supporting his mother in Odessa; he also observes the Sabbath. Cassiday and Rouhi contend that ‘The prostitutes of Kuprin’s novel all have, to one degree or another, Sonia Marmeladova’s proverbial heart of gold, while the fat and greedy madams provide their demonic antithesis’.<sup>71</sup> However, in fact with regard to Jewish prostitutes Kuprin stains even the positive stereotypes: *Iama* encourages one to see in every downtrodden ‘beautiful Jewess’ a potential future exploiter and in every prosperous one a villainous means of support for her position.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>69</sup> Julie A. Cassiday and Leyla Rouhi, ‘From Nevskii Prospekt to Zoia’s Apartment: Trials of the Russian Procureess’, *Russian Review*, 58 (1999), 413–31 (p. 421).

<sup>70</sup> *Iama*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>71</sup> Cassiday and Rouhi, p. 421.

### **Kuprin's *Belle Juive*: Sacred Beauty within the Jewish Mire**

In his short story 'Zhidovka' (1904), Kuprin explores the concept of the 'Jewish feminine' in the greatest depth out of all his works. The army doctor Kashintsev stops off at a wayside inn in the Pale of Settlement to eat and shelter himself from the cold on his way to a new post in a distant infantry regiment. The beauty of the Jewish owner Khatskel's wife, Etlia, sends Kashintsev into a state of awe for Jewish women, and forces him to reflect on the miracle of Jewish survival. Later recollections of his experience initially fill him with joy and strange musings, but with time the memory of the Jewess and the associated sentiments fade.

Khatskel' realizes most of the stereotypes about Jews in Russian literature. For example, he is obsequious and unrelenting in his attempts to make Kashintsev spend more money. He is also involved in prostitution and the illegal sale of vodka. Physically he is sickly-looking. In contrast, the Jewess of the story is the epitome of Jewish beauty. When she first appears in the story, she is fulfilling a traditional role for a Jewish woman, bringing to Kashintsev the food she has just cooked for him:

Из-за занавески вышла женщина и стала сзади прилавка, кутаясь с головой в большой серый платок. Когда Кашинцев повернулся к ней лицом, ему показалось, что какая-то невидимая сила внезапно толкнула его в грудь и чья-то холодная рука сжала его затрепыхавшееся сердце. Он никогда не только не видел такой сияющей, гордой, совершенной красоты, но даже не смел и думать, что она может существовать на свете. Прежде, когда ему случалось видеть прекрасные женские головки на картинах знаменитых художников, он про себя, внутренне, был уверен, что таких правильных, безукоризненных лиц не бывает в натуре, что они – вымысел творческой фантазии. И тем удивительнее, тем неправдоподобнее было для него это ослепительно прекрасное лицо, которое он теперь видел в грязном заезжем доме, пропахшем запахом нечистого жилья, в этой ободранной, пустой и холодной комнате, за прилавком, рядом с пьяным, храпящим и икающим во сне мужиком.<sup>72</sup>

Kuprin throws into question his reader's expectations by employing standard tropes to set the scene for the appearance of a repulsive Jewess, only to surprise the reader with a *belle juive*. Through the title, too, Kuprin plays on his reader's expectations. Since

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<sup>72</sup> Kuprin, 'Zhidovka', in Kuprin, SS, III, pp. 213–33 (p. 220).

‘*zhidovka*’ is the derogatory term for ‘Jewess’, one expects a correspondingly unflattering portrayal, yet the portrayal is on the whole positive; Etlia is more of a ‘*evreika*’ than a ‘*zhidovka*’, although the connotations of the latter term are also present in her depiction. The text questions not only the reader’s but also Kashintsev’s perception of Etlia. Just before Kashintsev sees her, Khatskel’ gives him an unusual-looking type of fruit vodka that Khatskel’ informs him Jews drink during Passover and that increases Kashintsev’s appetite.<sup>73</sup> His desire for and glorification of her may therefore partly be an effect of the alcohol, just as Susanna’s men were drawn to her partly through the smell of jasmine. Given the association in Russia of Jews getting people addicted to alcohol, Khatskel’ may intend that the vodka and Etlia increase Kashintsev’s sexual desire such that he accepts Khatskel’s offer of a prostitute. Like Chekhov’s Susanna and many other Jewish women in Russian literature, Etlia is therefore associated with prostitution, although it becomes clear in the story that Khatskel’ would not sell his wife. Kashintsev’s perception that Etlia possesses beauty found only in art encourages one to wonder to what extent this beauty is enhanced by Kashintsev’s imagination, fuelled by Khatskel’s mysterious drink. Kuprin constantly reminds his readers that the ‘Jewish feminine’ is being presented to them from a very particular, distorted point of view. The perception of the Russian male, we are reminded, is limited in its capacity to understand Jewish women and Jews in general. While the story does not present other viewpoints (i.e. those of the male and female Jew) in any depth, it does at least acknowledge some of the problems and limitations associated with the viewpoint that it does adopt.

As we have noted, on the one hand Kashintsev’s first sight of Etlia suggests a departure from the clichéd situation in Russian literature whereby a Russian male enters a Jewish abode or Jew-owned inn and sees beside a downtrodden Jew an unattractive, dirty Jewess or at least one of uncertain attractiveness. However, on the other hand, like Susanna, Etlia is associated with dirtiness and vulgarity. This condition is not limited to her environment: ‘Сверх яркого и смуглого румянца щек видны были коричневые полосы засохшей грязи, но Кашинцеву казалось, что никакая небрежность не может исказить этой торжествующей, цветущей красоты.’<sup>74</sup> Luker’s assertion that ‘Kuprin’s point is that not even the foul mire at the lowest depths of man’s existence can destroy the essential beauty of certain human beings’ is inadequate.<sup>75</sup> That ‘essential

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>75</sup> Nicholas Luker, *Alexander Kuprin* (Boston, 1978), p. 66.

beauty' is not unambiguously positive and pure. The text does not separate sufficiently the Jewess's beauty from the 'foul mire' in which she lives for one to interpret the Jewess's surroundings as merely accentuating her beauty: instead, the text presents this 'foulness' as part of that beauty. Other Russian writers from the period also associated Jewish female beauty with dirtiness and disease. For example, in Garin-Mikhailovskii's (1852–1906) *Studenty* (1895), a Russian from the nobility, Kartashev, falls in love with a Jewess, Rakhil', whose unparalleled beauty not only is not lessened by but even seems to be enhanced by the dirtiness of her clothes: 'Рахиль не обращала никакого внимания ни на прореху, ни на свой грязный костюм. Она и в нем была прекрасна, стройна и обворожительна.'<sup>76</sup> Rakhil's physical dirtiness makes Kartashev feel uninhibited in her company, unlike in that of other women. Her own readiness to engage in sexual activity with him confirms the association between Jewish women, dirtiness and sexual looseness. The revelation later in the novel that Rakhil' has infected Kartashev with syphilis and the association in Europe of Jews with the disease demonstrate that one can interpret the dirty appearance of beautiful Jewesses such as Kuprin's Etlia as an indication of their potential infectiousness. Hidden beneath Kuprin's paean to Jewish female beauty, and in a far milder and more implicit form than in 'Tina', one finds support for fin-de-siècle Russian medical and anthropological discourse that viewed the Jewish body 'as an alien one that needed to be kept at a distance to prevent it from infecting and contaminating the Russian members of the body politic'.<sup>77</sup> It may be the popular socio-cultural denigration of Jewish women and the perception of sexual intercourse with them as illicit that makes Kashintsev for one moment go so far as to think in terms of rape: 'А почем знать, не заключается ли вся цель, весь смысл, вся радость моей жизни в том, чтобы всеми правдами и неправдами завладеть вот такой женщиной, как эта, украдь, отнять, соблазнить, – не все ли равно?'<sup>78</sup>

On the one hand, Etlia appears as a faithful, obedient wife to Khatskel', and certainly not one of the women whom he would sell to Kashintsev. The police officer, Irisov, with whom Kashintsev drinks later in the story tells him that there is no physical possibility of obtaining her.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, her appearance gives the impression that she has the potential to be seduced. For example, she has a 'lazy and passionate

<sup>76</sup> N. G. Garin-Mikhailovskii, *Studenty*, in Garin-Mikhailovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 5 vols (Moscow, 1957–58), II (1957), pp. 7–232 (p. 194).

<sup>77</sup> Mondry, p. 33.

<sup>78</sup> 'Zhidovka', p. 223.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

expression' and her lips are described thus: 'полные, красные, и хотя в настоящую минуту сомкнуты, но кажутся раскрытыми, отдающими' <sup>80</sup> Given the tension between Etlia's almost transcendental beauty and her possible base seductiveness, she realizes at once both parts of the dichotomy in European literature between the figure of the Jewess as a spiritual, chaste beauty and that of her as a greedy, lustful seductress. However, while in *Ivanhoe*, for example, the Jewess's sultriness was matched by the proven capacity to sacrifice her life in order to preserve her virtue such that she appeared chaste but passionate rather than seductive, Etlia's ability to be seduced or to seduce is never tested. It may be that this hint of seductiveness is merely a product of Kashintsev's imagination, fuelled by alcohol and by myths about Jewish women: after all, her lips are only described as *seeming* to 'yield'.

It is telling that Kashintsev thinks of the joy of possessing Etlia sexually just as he judges her habits to be vulgar.<sup>81</sup> While Scott's Rebecca possessed nobility and feminine reserve, Kashintsev sees in the Jewess's non-conformity to noble women's hygiene and code of behaviour a non-conformity to the limits women impose on men's securing intimacy with them. Such a link was confirmed in Chekhov's and Garin-Mikhailovskii's texts, and also finds support in Lathers' finding that the French found in Jewish models in the nineteenth century 'an inherent shamelessness'.<sup>82</sup> In this view of the Jewess, she exists in a different moral world to the Gentile as a result of her Jewishness, and does not understand the implications of her sexual attractiveness, or the moral implications of her seductiveness or physical dirtiness. After all, Kashintsev views her not only as dirty, but also as backward and uneducated.<sup>83</sup> The cluster of implications around Etlia's dirt may mean that it makes her more sexually attractive for Kashintsev. By adding to the impression of her as the 'Other', it enhances the sense that she is outside the Christian sphere, and therefore outside the moral rules that Russians are expected to obey. Kashintsev's thought of kidnapping her must derive partly from the impression of being in an environment governed by different moral rules. If in this environment the norm that condemns married men for selling women does not apply, one may be more inclined to ignore the prohibition against rape. Moreover, Etlia's sexuality is cheapened by the fact that her husband does offer women's bodies to guests at the inn. There is, therefore, always the chance that the right price might allow to

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>82</sup> Marie Lathers, 'Posing the "Belle Juive": Jewish Models in 19th-Century Paris', *Woman's Art Journal*, 21 (2000), 27–32 (p. 27).

<sup>83</sup> 'Zhidovka', p. 223.

possess her. These factors and the association of Jewish women with rape identified by Sartre, which would be at the forefront of Russians' minds at the time the story was written because of the frequency and severity of pogroms, may increase Kashintsev's desire further – only for it to be frustrated by the knowledge that in reality she is unavailable. Kuprin therefore portrays the Jewess as provoking desire not just for sex but also for sexual violence. The dirt on Etlia may also be a projection of the guilt Kashintsev feels towards his sexual desire for her, since in the European Christian worldview sexual desire is often considered sinful. The anxiety that Kashintsev feels upon first seeing Etlia may be explained by his fear of the danger of her attractiveness. Kashintsev may experience his sexual desire for Etlia as something that takes control of him but that he cannot fulfil because the social norms by which he lives forbid it. Given the clear link in 'Zhidovka' and Kuprin's works in general between the Jewish race and the Jewess's beauty, the text can also be seen as relating the anxiety Kashintsev experiences to a danger of specifically Jewish beauty, rather than to the general danger of the non-specific woman. The Jewish female in this reading becomes a body onto which one projects one's desires and fears in order to disown them, in a similar way to how the men of 'Tina' used the Jewess to fulfil desires for extramarital sex while giving themselves the illusion that they were outside the sphere of conventional morality. The marginalization of the Jewess allows one to fantasize about or actually commit atrocities such as rape while believing in one's impunity.

Apart from having these base thoughts, Kashintsev also experiences emotions similar to those of a person falling in love: 'ему хотелось заплакать от восторга и нежности, которые овладели им и стесняли ему грудь и щекотали глаза'.<sup>84</sup> He also glorifies and almost sanctifies Etlia's exotic beauty by comparing it to that of biblical women:

Вот стоит эта женщина, на лице которой отражается божественная красота, внушающая священный восторг. Сколько тысячелетий ее народ должен был ни с кем не смешиваться, чтобы сохранить эти изумительные библейские черты. С тем же гладким платком на голове, с теми же глубокими глазами и скорбной складкой около губ рисуют матерь Иисуса Христа. Той же самой безукоризненной чистой прелестью сияли и мрачная Юдифь, и кроткая Руфь, и нежная Лия, и прекрасная Рахиль, и Агарь, и Сарра. Глядя на нее, веришь, чувствуешь и точно видишь, как этот народ

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

идет в своей умопомрачительной генеалогии к Моисею, подымается к Аврааму и выше, еще выше – прямо до великого, грозного, мстительного библейского бога!<sup>85</sup>

On the one hand, these thoughts are the result of sublimation: Kashintsev attempts to overcome the negative ideology associated with the Jewess that casts her as a seductress or rape victim by sublimating both the object of his desire and his desire itself. He sublimates the object of his desire into a work of art, perceiving in her features what he had previously considered to be merely the invention of creative imagination, as we saw both in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section and in the reference in the above quotation to artistic representations of biblical figures. This allows Kashintsev to sublimate his desire to a state of ecstatic artistic appreciation. On the other hand, these thoughts are simultaneously also a genuine response to female beauty, heightened by this intelligentsia member's knowledge of and respect for Old and New Testament female figures.

While Susanna provokes indignation, Etlia inspires an awe in her admirer that makes him respect her to a degree, or at least what he sees her as representing. While most Gentile male characters in Russian and West European literature pursue the *belle juive* romantically or sexually, Kashintsev is able to transcend his initial feelings of desire to contemplate with awe the historical and contemporary significance of the Jewish nation and the place of the Jewess within it. As Rischin remarks: 'Kashintsev's encounter with Etel leads to a spiritualisation of her beauty, and a sublimation of the erotic marks the first phase of his reflections'.<sup>86</sup>

Kashintsev's contrasting assessments of Etlia represent two archetypal responses to female beauty. The first one is the inspiration of awe and respect in its beholder, who perceives it as indicating nobility or high aesthetic, intellectual or moral qualities. One sees this response in Kashintsev's admiration of Etlia's beauty and in his linking it with the glory of Jewish history. It is this response that leads Kashintsev to compare Etlia with the Virgin Mary. In this his perception of the Jewess represents an embodiment of Bitton-Jackson's contention that the virgin mother is one of the stock images of women and, specifically, of Jewish women.<sup>87</sup> Kashintsev sees in her beauty possible qualities of chasteness, maternal instincts, and even an implicit link to Christ himself. Kashintsev's connection of her beauty with dirt and seductiveness, however, represents a contrasting

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>86</sup> Rischin, p. 37.

<sup>87</sup> Bitton-Jackson, p. 9.

view of beauty as constituting evil through tempting one into sin. These interpretations of beauty, in turn, can be related to the dichotomous view of women as either chaste Madonna figures or dangerous harlots.

### **The Jewish Feminine as the Link to Jewish History and the Sustainer of the Jewish Nation**

In the passage quoted above, although the role of all the heroines (apart from Judith) as mothers is implicitly glorified by the reference to genealogy, their maternity plays a secondary role to their beauty. It is their beauty that captivates Kashintsev, and it is their non-maternal traits that he highlights in his description of them, selecting instead a range of attractive features, such as ‘gloominess’, humility and beauty. Only Mary is singled out for her role as a mother; despite the mention of three of the four Jewish matriarchs, none of them are identified explicitly as mothers. In reality, Jewish genealogy fascinates Kashintsev less for its links to Jewish history than for its preservation of Jewish beauty. Consequently, the erotic motivation of Kashintsev’s musings remains evident.

The passage demonstrates the protagonist’s awareness of what was a cliché in Russian and West European literature’s relation to the Jewess: the dual connection to both Judaism and, through Mary, Christianity. However, the passage leads one to associate the Jewess most closely with the Jewish world, not the Christian. The flow of the passage gives one the impression that, while Mary begets Jesus, the Old Testament Jewesses and Etlia lead not forwards towards the birth of Jesus and towards what in common socio-cultural perceptions is the Christian God of forgiveness and compassion, but backwards towards the Jews’ oppressive, terror-inspiring God. All the same, the Jewess’s face keeps alive the hope of salvation for Jews through Jesus via Mary. The dual links to both ‘primitive’ Judaism and progressive, merciful Christianity, partly explain the narrator’s mixed feelings of anxiety, awe and ecstasy. Moreover, the notion of the ‘divine’ functions in the text in such a way that the employment of the term in relation to beauty is not limited to its extolment but also to sexual possession of it. Earlier in the story, Kashintsev had thought: ‘Единственное счастье – обладать такой женщиной, знать, что эта божественная красота – твоя.’<sup>88</sup> The passage cited above thus embodies the dual attitudes of Russians towards Jews as a source of both desire and fear, as subjects of both derision and envious adulation.

Indeed, Kashintsev’s admiration of Etlia leads him temporarily to lose his

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<sup>88</sup> ‘Zhidovka’, p. 223.

Russian, Gentile sense of superiority over Jews. Whether or not Kashintsev's wonder is slightly exaggerated by alcohol, the beauty of the Jewess transports him through time and makes him marvel at Jewish achievements:

Вот я гляжу на нее и чувствую, как за ней раскрывается черная бездна веков. Здесь чудо, здесь какая-то божественная тайна. О, что же я, вчерашний дикарь, а сегодняшний интеллигент, – что я значу в сравнении с этой живой загадкой, может быть, самой необъяснимой в истории человечества?<sup>89</sup>

For all the Gentile world's advances in knowledge, it still cannot comprehend the mystery of Jewish survival. While other ancient nations have died out, the Jewish nation lives on 'as if fulfilling some supernatural predestination'.<sup>90</sup> Two reversals therefore take place. First, Kashintsev's desire to possess the Jewess's beauty is reversed so that he adopts a partly passive position of allowing it to fascinate him and carry him away, although, since it is he who is attributing qualities to the beauty he is not fully passive. Second, his disparaging attitude towards Jews is reversed so that it is he, as a Russian Gentile, who feels insignificant. Through the text's treatment of the Jewess's beauty, it is able to pay tribute to the uniqueness and universal significance of Jews in the face of their destruction and their reduction in the eyes of some to non-beings.

It is namely the Jewess and not the male Jew who explains the historical mystery of Jewish survival: 'еврейская женщина стережет дух и тип расы, бережно несет сквозь ручьи крови, под гнетом насилия, священный огонь народного гения и никогда не даст потушить его'.<sup>91</sup> In contrast to Chekhov's 'Tina', then, Kuprin's story glorifies its Jewess's femininity. While in 'Tina' the Jewess's body serves to distinguish between Jew and Gentile, in 'Zhidovka' it is the distinction between the male and female Jew that comes to the fore. The Jewess may be 'other' to the Russian, but the Jewish male is more 'other' still. Although the males of the Jewish race in Kashintsev's perception are in a state of deterioration, the females preserve the race and its former glory through their physical beauty and their endurance. This echoes Valman's conclusion with regard to English literature that 'within the discourse of degeneration prevalent at the *fin de siècle*, the Jewess appeared as a racial redeemer, the beautiful

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp. 226–27.

counterpart to the physically degenerate Jewish male'.<sup>92</sup> The only possibly positive attitude Kashintsev has towards male Jews is pity, as shown by his description of Khatskel': 'Пусть Хацкель хил, жалок и болезнен, пусть вечная борьба с жизнью положила на его лицо жестокие следы плутовства, робости и недоверия: ведь он тысячи лет "крутился как-нибудь", задыхался в разных гетто.'<sup>93</sup> The male Jew is too pathetic to inspire admiration for any aspect of Jewry, except perhaps through his endurance over thousands of years, but then even this is shown as bare survival rather than the heroic endurance that Jewish women have achieved. Contemporary racial discourse identified Jewish immutability with the preservation of a tendency towards disease in both sexes, as reflected in Chekhov's works. Kashintsev, on the other hand, implies that such predisposition to disease may be not so much a congenital flaw inherent to the race as much as a predisposition acquired by the male half of the race through unfavourable conditions and through a lack of spiritual strength, albeit a trait that is now presumably irreversible. Kashintsev identifies Jewish immutability not with a tendency towards disease but with the preservation of Jewish women's beautiful features through their tenacity and through the operation of divine will. Consequently, although Kashintsev uses the term 'race', he believes that there are vital factors beyond the purely biological. All the same, the biological must play a role, since Jewish women have lived in the same conditions as their men: Jewish women must be inherently more resistant not only spiritually but also physically.

If Russian literature has tended to depict a large number of its female characters as sacrificing their happiness for that of their husbands and families as described in the Introduction, the Jewish woman according to 'Zhidovka' sacrifices happiness for the survival of her whole nation, suffering violence in order to preserve national spirit. De Beauvoir's contention that the female body is a vessel applies to the Jewess as depicted by 'Zhidovka': she is a vessel for the national spirit.<sup>94</sup> The female Jew therefore embodies femininity in the European conception, but the male Jew does not embody masculinity, with its active, transcendent force. The problem of Jewry, then, is that its national genius is only immanent: the Jewish people lacks the masculine element of transcendence required to overcome the entrapment of the national genius in feminine

<sup>92</sup> Valman, p. 210. On the Jewess as a potential agent of regeneration and redemption in late nineteenth-century English literature, see also Valman's chapter 'The Shadow of the Harem: *Fin-de-siècle* Racial Romance' in Valman, pp. 173–205.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>94</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H. M. Parshley (New York, 1993), p. 157. Riabov has applied De Beauvoir's ideas on gender to Russian Silver Age thought: Oleg Riabov, *Zhenshchina i zhenstvennost' v filosofii serebrianogo veka* (Ivanovo, 1997), p. 11.

immanence, and Jewry remains a feminine nation of which one half is in a state of decay.

On the other hand, Jewish men are essential for the preservation of Jewish female beauty. Jewish women's adherence to the law forbidding miscegenation allows them to pass on the 'sacred fire of national genius' because, despite male Jews' degeneration, male Jewishness is needed to sustain the nation.<sup>95</sup> The beauty of the Jewess and the preservation of national spirit therefore depend on her exclusive sexuality: mixing Jewish blood with healthier Gentile blood would lead to a dilution of the Jewish blood and therefore a lessening of Jewish racial beauty. Remembering an argument he had with another doctor who asserted that Jews need to engage in miscegenation with other nations if they want to avoid dying out, Kashintsev realizes that to prove the doctor wrong he would point to Etilia and exclaim: 'вот залог бессмертия еврейского народа!'<sup>96</sup> While 'Tina' associated the Jewish feminine with racial degeneration, 'Zhidovka' associates it with a perpetuity that is at once racial and spiritual.

Readers of the time versed in degeneration theory might regard centuries of endogamy as one of the reasons for the Jewish male degeneration depicted in the text.<sup>97</sup> Endogamy in Kashintsev's view therefore has the opposite effects for Jewish men and women, leading to degeneration in the former while preserving the most important and unique racial elements of the latter. Remaining Jewish entails the preservation of female beauty and of the mystery of the Jewish spirit, but also the continuing degeneration of male Jews. Jewish time is unprogressive: while in the case of female Jews it is stagnant, in the case of male Jews it is regressive. Kashintsev believes that he has found the answer to what Jews as a race should do (remain exclusive), but in fact the text suggests that this will only lead to further Jewish degeneration, and further persecution by Gentiles for the very faults that Jews have acquired as a result of their refusal to die out. Kuprin's text, then, uses sexuality to emphasize and concretize the differences between male and female Jews. If Jewish female sexuality is associated with beauty and eternity, and male sexuality with degeneration, one might interpret the text as marking Jewish male sexuality itself as degenerate – a reading that would fully conform to socio-cultural attitudes of the time.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> 'Zhidovka', p. 226.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>97</sup> See Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p. 174.

<sup>98</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 96.

## A Mute Genius

While Kuprin's Jewess is superior to the male Jew and does provoke feelings of inferiority in the Russian male, she is glorified in a manner that feminist scholars have denounced as demeaning to women – not for being active but for enduring, not for creating art but for inspiring and constituting art. As the feminine in the worldview of some Silver Age thinkers inspires male artists but is unable to be creative itself,<sup>99</sup> so in Kuprin's text the Jewess inspires the male protagonist to understand the mystery of Jewish history. If in V. S. Solov'ev's (1853–1900) worldview the eternal feminine brought the male closer to the mystical essence of the material world, for Kuprin the Jewish female's beauty seems to act as the portal to a comprehension of the wonder of Jewish history.<sup>100</sup> In accordance with the idea of the feminine as a mere vessel, she herself appears to have no active role in this history, but only embodies and sustains it through her endurance. It is for the Gentile male to gain some conception of this history through the inspiration of the Jewish female, and then to carry out the masculine (because active and creative) task of putting this history and its significance into words.

The concept of male protagonists (especially narrators) appropriating female characters' voices and speaking for them instead of letting them speak for themselves is a feature of European and Russian literature that has sparked the ire of many feminist critics.<sup>101</sup> As Rischin argues, Kuprin's Jewess is doubly mute, through her status as the wife of the servile Khatskel' and through being the subject of ekphrastic address.<sup>102</sup> Kashintsev appropriates her voice to speak not only for her and not only for Jewish women, but for the whole Jewish people. The text's feminization of the Jewish people therefore functions on multiple levels. The fact that it takes a Gentile to articulate Jewry's status as the Chosen People reveals the extent to which this status is an abstraction that has no relation to the everyday reality of Jewish existence on earth at this moment: Jews are so passive that they, like women, are silenced to the extent that they are not able to articulate the most significant facts about themselves.

Another problematic aspect of the text relates to the text's glorification of Jewish and especially Jewish female suffering. Rischin states that 'passages in which Kashintsev extols Etel as the embodiment of the history of the Jewish people can be read as the gift of the imagination of a liberal Russian writer – a compensation, if only

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, Riabov, p. 82.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, Solov'ev's essay *Smysl liubvi* (1892–94).

<sup>101</sup> For an analysis of this phenomenon in a work of Russian literature about a Jewish woman (Turgenev's 'Neschastnaia'), see Jane T. Costlow, 'Speaking the Sorrow of Women: Turgenev's "Neschastnaia" and Evgeniia Tur's "Antonina"', *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), 328–35.

<sup>102</sup> Rischin, p. 38.

aesthetic, for the violence of his own time'.<sup>103</sup> However, Kashintsev in fact appears to see the Jewess's beauty and its preservation of national genius not only as a compensation for violence against Jews, but also as inseparable from the context of this violence: if it is only through enduring violence that the Jewess has preserved the Jewish racial essence, then that violence is as inseparable from her Jewish beauty as it is from the wretched timorousness of Khatskel's appearance. If, as demonstrated above, Jewish suffering has led to Jewish male weakness, but has allowed the Jewish woman to retain Jewish beauty and genius, it is difficult not to see in Kashintsev's lauding of her beauty praise for the suffering that he sees as essential to it. In this reading, the desire for Etlia that Kashintsev sublimates may even be tinged with sadism. After all, he does not wish to see an end to the Jewess's suffering (since logically this would make her less Jewish and less an embodiment of her people's genius) any more than he wishes to see an end to her beauty. Consequently, by presenting the Jewish woman as both tolerating and benefiting from Jewish suffering, the story may unintentionally condone the sexual and other violence of which she is a victim.

### **‘Обыкновенная бедная еврейка, и больше ничего’?**

Apart from aiming to explore, support and create myths about the Jewish nation, ‘Zhidovka’ also aims to reveal ordinary Jews’ lives in all their ordinary details. Etlia and Khatskel’s lives are on the one hand banal, consisting of cooking food, serving customers, and so on. On the other hand, their lives are characterized by frequent anxiety, as they scrape a living and try to tolerate or at best avoid the violence that threatens them, as epitomized by the scene when the drunkard Trofim becomes abusive and insults them using antisemitic language.<sup>104</sup> It is Jewish life as a precarious, violent existence that Russian literature tends to show, rather than the more banal aspects of Jewish life. Etlia’s physicality can therefore be seen as standing for yet another aspect of the Jewish question: the banal (but harsh) reality of their everyday lives (symbolized by her common behaviour and demonstrated by their dull lives) in contrast to the myths that paint Jews and Jewesses in terms of extreme, mythologized stereotypes (symbolized by her extreme beauty and her and her husband’s suffering). Kuprin in his text therefore both follows and elaborates myths and goes beyond them in an attempt to show the reality of Jewish life.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>104</sup> ‘Zhidovka’, p. 219.

While other writers were focusing on the degeneration of Jews or their suffering, especially their women's suffering, Kuprin wrote a work that emphasized Jewish women's endurance and their ability to preserve the unique attributes of their nation. Rather than focusing on how well assimilated Jewish women are into Russian society, which is a major concern of many of the works discussed in this thesis, including 'Tina', 'Zhidovka' also looks at the 'Jewish feminine' in relation to the Jewish nation and its history. Kashintsev celebrates the characteristics that are deemed particular to Jewish women and directly warns of the dangers inherent in their dilution through the processes of assimilation that texts about Jewish women traditionally advocate. While Russian literature, as this thesis demonstrates, tended to advocate the employment of the positive characteristics perceived in Jewish women such as self-sacrifice in the pursuit of Christian, universal or Russian national goals, 'Zhidovka' differs by lauding (albeit ambiguously) Jewish women's devotion namely to their own nation. As Chapter Two will demonstrate, the unprecedented devastation of the pogroms of the early twentieth century forced some liberal writers to value the Jewish nation and its traditions more: when the idea of the destruction of a whole nation becomes even a distant possibility, urging assimilation appears degrading. Both Kuprin's and, as I shall show, Chirikov's texts use the Jewess's physicality to make the case for the preservation of Jewishness despite Jewry's faults.

## Conclusion

The two writers discussed provide contrasting versions of the Jewish feminine. While Susanna displays a disturbing gender ambiguity, Etlia embodies archetypal femininity, albeit one that is characteristically Jewish, ‘other’ and inaccessible to the Gentile male. Chekhov offers a biological, demystified view of the Jewish feminine that is devoid of a spiritual component. Kuprin, on the other hand, mysticizes the Jewess’s body and presents it as inseparable from the ‘Jewish spirit’: the preservation of Jewish women’s physical features goes hand in hand with the preservation of the Jewish spirit. This is especially significant when considered in the light of Russian culture’s general antipathy towards the body.<sup>105</sup> Like Solov’ev and Rozanov, ‘Zhidovka’ glorifies Jews’ veneration of the body, but limits this glorification to the female, while associating both the male and female Jewish body with dirt and racial otherness.

The works considered in this chapter support Safran’s observation that the Jewess is an empty sign ‘able to represent two opposites simultaneously’.<sup>106</sup> While in ‘Tina’ physicality embodies Jewish decay and sexual rapaciousness, in ‘Zhidovka’ it embodies Jewish survival and historical glory. In Kashintsev’s formulation, the Jewish feminine is both the sexually available lowly Jewess and the Jewess who is faithful to her husband; both the embodiment of the Jewish feminine who clings to backward Jewishness and the one capable of giving birth to Christianity; and both the embodiment of a stagnant race and the preserver of a once-great race.

If the Jewess can represent two opposing values, so too can she inspire opposite sentiments: she is, as we saw in the Introduction, ‘an empty signifier onto which fantasies of desire or vengeance are arbitrarily projected’.<sup>107</sup> Kuprin’s Jewess concords with Ockman’s assertion that the female body can be ‘a site for the assertion of male power’.<sup>108</sup> Whether one portrays that body as chaste or sexually inviting, one can assert control over it, and consequently over the woman. Ockman claims: ‘Withheld or restrained in positive stereotypes, sexuality is unleashed in negative ones, but only so that it can be conquered.’<sup>109</sup> Kuprin’s text confines the Jewess’s sexuality to a few vaguely seductive gestures, and sublimates it to artistic beauty, in keeping with the text’s generally positive presentation of her. However, Kuprin also allows Kashintsev to

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, Jane T. Costlow, Stephanie Sandler and Judith Vowles, ‘Introduction’, in Costlow, Sandler and Vowles, *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture* (Stanford, 1993), pp. 1–38.

<sup>106</sup> Safran, p. 193.

<sup>107</sup> Valman, p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Ockman, ‘Two Large Eyebrows’, p. 14.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

fantasize about sexually conquering the Jewess. Kashintsev's control over her sexuality reflects the degree to which throughout the work it is he who determines the characteristics and significance of the Jewess. Even Khatskel' is allowed to say more about Etlia than Etlia herself. It is partly because Kashintsev has largely removed the threat of Etlia's sexuality and almost reduced her to a Madonna figure that he feels secure to launch into a corresponding paean to the Jewess.

Chekhov's text, on the other hand, allows the Jewess to 'unleash' her sexuality. While the resulting portrayal may be less complimentary to the Jewess, the liberation of her sexuality is accompanied by the granting to her of a voice and a genuinely individual personality. Her sexuality is not 'conquered' but rather appears to conquer, in accordance with contemporary antisemitic stereotypes, only for the Jewess's alleged excessive sexual interest to be shown as common to all the characters in the work and the degree of her perceived predatoriness to be relativized through a demonstration of the ease with which it can be resisted by those of reasonable moral strength.

As Chekhov both supports and undermines stereotypes by relativizing them and allowing for individuality within them, so Kuprin emphasizes the fact that the various manifestations of the 'Jewish feminine' in which Kashintsev engages may be partly or wholly mere constructs, devised over centuries by males both Jewish and Gentile and inspired by emotions and states of arousal and intoxication.

Through analysing the varied manifestations of the Jewish feminine in 'Zhidovka' one can gain an insight into the variety of reactions and attitudes towards both Jewish women and Jews in general held by many educated, liberal Russians. For example, the fact that five years after publishing 'Zhidovka' Kuprin denounced racial exclusivity does not necessarily imply that he could not also admire it at some level, as his protagonist Kashintsev does. 'Zhidovka' deals with this dual view of Jews by imposing a gender division onto it, such that the Jewess largely embodies the Russian intelligentsia's positive views of Jews, while the Jewish male embodies negative views. However, although the Jewish feminine therefore functions as an outlet for largely positive views of Jews to be promoted, it simultaneously allows negative views to be aired as well. Like the Jewish male, the female provokes desire for the anti-Jewish violence that was so prevalent at the time that the work was published. Moreover, although their beauty may lead one to forget it, representatives of the 'Jewish feminine' are involved in the same illegal, exploitative types of business as male Jews.

'Zhidovka' represents an exception to Mondry's finding that in late tsarist Russian culture it was the Jewish male who best epitomized both racial difference and

racial atavism. Kuprin's Jewess embodies not only the Jewish feminine but also the echt-Jew and Jews' racial essence. It is she who preserves the attributes that have made the Jewish nation great such as their closeness to God and tenacity, and she who has ensured their longevity as a people through genealogy. At the same time, she also embodies what Kashintsev sees as Jews' backwardness through her dirtiness, lack of manners and apparent ignorance. Moreover, she, too, occupies the typically Jewish position of selling alcohol and scraping through life through breaking the law and exploitation. Furthermore, while Kuprin radically alters the stereotype of the Jewess of the wayside inn or Jewish abode in Russian literature, she, too, is not fully human in this portrayal: instead of being monstrous, she is reduced to an embodiment.

The Jewesses of both works differ from the typical Jewess of Russian literature, particularly that written before the 1880s, in that neither is principally a source of pity. Nor can the male Russian look down on either of them in the manner that Russian male protagonists typically looked down on male Jews, as occurs in 'Zhidovka' itself. Rather, the Jewess brings the Russian male down from his position of superiority, Susanna by showing him that he actually shares many of the features that he wants to dismiss as belonging to the Jews or to Jewish women, and Etlia by demonstrating that in the context of world history any feelings of national superiority that he might harbour are groundless.

Both Jewesses also represent potential threats to the Russian male. Since Kuprin's Jewess is the epitome of Jewishness, she also epitomizes the threatening otherness that Jewishness represents, as evinced by her close connection to the 'terrifying' God of the Old Testament. Furthermore, her beauty is unsettling, provoking anxiety and frustration, not least because it is unavailable to the Russian. Kuprin's Jewess, despite her exalted qualities, reveals some of the ways in which Jewish women were seen as a threat and as a provocation to Russian males, and therefore enhances our understanding of the 'aura of rape and violence' identified by Sartre. Like Chekhov's Susanna, she also contributes to the construction of an image of the Jewess as flaunting a sexuality threatening to the Russian male and therefore to Russian society.

Etlia also represents ethnic competition for the 'strong' Russian woman of Russian literature. She does not possess the imperiousness and valour of Scott's Rebecca, so she is not a direct competitor for, say, Turgenev's heroines devoted to social improvement. Yet apart from her Oriental beauty she offers something no Russian heroine can claim: the link to a glorious ancient history and the truly heroic preservation of this link. While the Russian 'strong woman' typically makes the

Russian male protagonist feel inferior through her moral superiority, Kuprin's Jewess does so through invoking the ways in which her race is superior to the protagonist's. However, this ethnic otherness and the different moral sphere in which the Jewess lives according to the texts examined in this chapter render both Jewesses far from serious contenders for romantic relationships with Gentiles of the type portrayed in classic tales of the *belle juive*. The Jewish feminine remains an alien figure on the outskirts of society.

## Chapter Two

### The Jewess and Assimilation: Krestovskii's *Zhid idet* and Chirikov's *Evrei*

#### 1. Introduction

##### Aggressive Adaptation and False Acculturation versus Identificational Assimilation

As explored in the Introduction to this thesis, Russian literature reflected the problems associated with Jewish assimilation, including the peculiarities of the situation of Jewish women. Although Russian literature always used the Jew to define Russian heroes through contrast, assimilation stories offer a particularly fruitful opportunity to contrast a representative of the Jews not only with certain representatives of the Russians but also with Russian society as a whole, or at least a broad section within it. Nathans terms the modification, as opposed to erasure, of signs of difference, particularly in the sphere of culture and identity, 'acculturation'.<sup>1</sup> The heroines of the works on which this chapter focuses, on the other hand, pursue to varying degrees what Gordon terms 'identificational assimilation', whereby an individual genuinely and fully identifies with and adopts the values and culture of her host society and bases her sense of peoplehood on it.<sup>2</sup> A Jew dressing up like a Russian and reading Russian literature is acculturating because she or he is losing the trappings of her or his own culture and adopting those of another, but if she or he continues to practise Judaism and refuses to consider non-Jews as potential marriage partners, she or he is not engaging in full identificational assimilation.

Like Gordon, Safran notes the importance of ideology to assimilation.<sup>3</sup> As examples of the behaviour of an assimilator she gives receiving a secular education and baptism.<sup>4</sup> Sincerely undertaking such activities involves a decision to abandon the traditional Jewish way of life and adopt far more than the superficial features of Russian society: genuine conversion demands a change of religious mindset (so central to Jewish identity) away from that of one's group to that of the larger society. In this case, the assimilation to Russian society is so great that it typically involves voluntary or involuntary exclusion from mainstream Jewish life. Superficial acculturation and

<sup>1</sup> Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York and Oxford, 1964), pp. 70–71.

<sup>3</sup> Safran, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

identificational assimilation represent extremes between which there are many gradations. For example, neither of the heroines on which this chapter focuses, Tamara of V. V. Krestovskii's trilogy *Zhid idet* (1888–91) or Liia of E. N. Chirikov's play *Evrei* (1904), succeeds in entirely losing her sense of connection to Jews, and Liia expresses her opposition to conversion to Christianity yet is considering a life-long relationship with a Russian.

‘Zhidovka’ and ‘Tina’ present two contrasting Jewesses with regard to the question of acculturation and assimilation. Susanna tries to hide her Jewishness, despite professing pride in it, and to make herself appear more Russian, which one could pass off as an attempt at acculturation. However, her genuine attempts at engagement with Russians and the fact that she is shown to share fundamental qualities with them suggest, first, that some kind of assimilation has occurred and, second, that the profound changes usually associated with assimilation may not be necessary, since the Jewess may already be closer to the Russian than is commonly thought. Etlia, on the other hand, has no apparent sense of shame at her Jewishness and makes no attempt even to acculturate. What both Jewesses do have in common is a striking ability to adapt to their environment. Kuprin emphasizes in his Jewess her resilience, a quality that pre-revolutionary Russian literature was often inclined to present positively in the female Jew but negatively in the male. Kuprin does not present the quality as a manifestation of Jewish obstinacy, the traditional theological accusation. Rather, he endorses Jewish refusal to change and assimilate as a manifestation of Jewish female strength; Etlia valiantly endures and adapts to an alien and hostile environment, but she preserves the features, customs and mentality of her distant ancestors.

As a form of adaptation, assimilation is always potentially suspicious. One of the commonest antisemitic accusations is that Jews adapt to foreign environments by aggressively making their way into positions of economic influence at the expense of natives, pretending that they are sympathetic and loyal to the locals. Integration into the Russian environment can therefore be superficial and deceptive. For Russian antisemites, this typically implies that Jews feign the sharing of Russian values and admiration for things Russian, attempting to adopt Russians' language and manners while retaining hostility to Russians and maintaining ‘Jewish’ features such as lust for profit. Such Jews, seen from the antisemite's viewpoint, acculturate only in order to gain better social and economic positions from which to exploit Russians more effectively. Such ‘hidden Jews’ became particularly prevalent in late nineteenth-century Russian literature. One often comes across Jewish parents forcing their sons and

daughters to gain a Russian education and pursue other forms of assimilation largely for reasons of social and financial enhancement, usually with limited or no attraction towards Russian or European culture. For example, in the antisemitic Jewish apostate S. K. Litvin's (born Sh. Kh. Efron, 1849–1926) novella *Sredi evreev* (1896) the Jewish mother's apparent admiration for European culture and attempts to give her children a European education and upbringing are revealed to be driven by greed for financial benefits and pride. So superficial is her and her husband's attachment that their abundance of books derives not from a love of learning, but from a desire to impress visitors.<sup>5</sup> Typically, Jews of this type in Russian literature are unsuccessful at hiding their Jewishness, but that does not mean that they are harmless. Chapter Three of this thesis explores works depicting male and female Jews as superficially assimilating into Russian society in a plot ultimately to undermine and destroy it.

The Introduction to this thesis and Safran's study show that Russian literature did present the possibility of Jews genuinely attempting to integrate into the Russian environment. One feature that almost all the texts studied by Safran have in common is their insistence that Jewish acculturation cannot take place without producing much anxiety and doubt, both in Jews themselves and in Gentile characters, representing the real-life fears and doubts of many Russians towards the question of Jewish assimilation. This is despite the fact that there were cases in the Russian Empire of Jews whose Jewishness (whether altered as the result of conversion or legally retained) did not cause them identity crises, or prevent them from pursuing successful careers or from winning the respect of Russian society.<sup>6</sup> Safran argues that the problematic nature of Jewish acculturation forced writers to develop new ways of describing it, which led them to invent new literary types, 'situated between and beyond existing ones', in order to reflect the previously unknown Jewish assimilator in literature.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of the extent to which Jewish characters in Russian literature achieve their goals of changing their culture, affiliation and identity, they serve to demonstrate the allusiveness, ambiguity, unreliability and, often, transience of identity for Russians as well as for Jews, subverting that identity's assumed innateness.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly important given the growing influence of racial discourse. Assimilation narratives therefore explored and questioned Russian identity as much as Jewish. Indeed, Safran finds that

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<sup>5</sup> S. K. Litvin, *Sredi evreev* (St Petersburg, 1897), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Safran, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 192–95.

*Ivanov* alerts the audience to the phenomenon of self-transformation not only by Jews in contact with Russians, but also by Russians in contact with Jews.<sup>9</sup>

### **Suffering as a Means for the Jewess to Prove Her Right to a Place in Russian Society**

This thesis has already demonstrated the tendency of Russian literature to portray the Jewess's entry into Russian society as typically involving suffering because of, among other things, Russian prejudice and rejection by her Jewish family (in the case of *Ivanov*, for example). In extreme cases such as Turgenev's 'Kuda tak provorno, zhidovka mladaia?' and Litvin's play *Syny Izrailia* (1899), the father punishes the Jewess's disobedience by killing her.

The Jewess in Russian literature from the 1880s onwards often possesses a double guilt. First, she feels guilty for having abandoned her family, or just her father, or for considering doing so; this trope goes back to Marlowe and Shakespeare. Her second guilt revolves around her belief that she is not contributing sufficiently to the improvement of the lot of Russian society. This second theme could reach its full development in Russian literature only in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when the prominence of the Jewish question and of political activism meant that the Jewess had to do more to prove her right to belong to the Russian nation. It is this sense of responsibility and guilt towards society that distinguishes the typical Jewess in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Russian literature from the figure of the Jewess in the preceding period. The Jewess's inability to overcome this guilt increases the reader's perception of her as a victim. In *Sementkovskii's Evrei i zhidy*, discussed in the Introduction, the heroine Raisa's guilt is directed towards her inability to fulfil her social obligations: she wants to assimilate so that she can participate in radical groups and help the Empire's oppressed, but her father forces her to operate within the sphere of the oppressors. Part of Raisa's proof of her readiness for ideological assimilation consists in her undergoing much suffering in order to prove that she does not share the values and behavioural characteristics of those Jews portrayed as 'bad' (*Sementkovskii's zhidy* as opposed to *evrei*). While Russians fall relatively easily into the temptation to become like these nefarious Jews in the novel, Raisa struggles to fulfil the Russian female ideal of the woman dedicated to society's betterment come what may. Vladimir, the Russian whom Raisa admired and with whom she fell in love, does not fulfil his social ideals, but instead becomes rich by writing for newspapers, an act of

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

particular hypocrisy given his earlier scorning of Raisa for her connection to her exploitative father. Raisa, on the other hand, sacrifices her wealth and her health for the good of society, spending her married life performing charitable deeds despite her great unhappiness and the impossibility of escaping the Jewish world.<sup>10</sup> Sementkovskii's novel thus shows the hypocrisy of Russians who advocate social ideals but actually work against them, and posits the Jewess, due to her extraordinary qualities, as the type of person most able to serve society.

The theme of the Jewess suffering in order to prove her right to a place in Russian society is not only a feature of texts from the late nineteenth century. It is also present in the texts relating to Jewish women in the philosemitic anthology *Shchit*, published 25 years after Sementkovskii's novella and at the end of the period on which this thesis focuses, in 1915, by L. N. Andreev, M. Gor'kii and F. Sologub.<sup>11</sup> Its purpose was to combat antisemitism in the Russian Empire during World War One, manifested not only in an outbreak of pogroms, but also in the perpetuation of the myth that Jews were acting in a cowardly manner in the war.<sup>12</sup> The anthology consists principally of essays, short stories and poems by a variety of cultural and intellectual figures advocating an end to prejudice and discrimination by state and society against Jews and their full social and legal integration. The arguments put forward include the fact that Jews are suffering at least as much as Russians during the war, fighting just as valiantly but having to bear the additional burden of Russian discrimination and abuse on account of their Jewishness. However, one's overall impression from the anthology is not of Jewish heroism (of which there is surprisingly little given the collection's aims) but of sentimentalized Jewish suffering.

In one of F. Sologub's contributions, the short story 'Svet vechernii', the Jewess Sarra comes to her Russian teacher Ivan upset and scared.<sup>13</sup> She explains that, while she was meeting the wounded from the war and serving them refreshments one of the soldiers had called her '*zhidovka prokliataia*'.<sup>14</sup> Sarra cannot comprehend how Russians could have such an attitude towards Jews, given that Jews love Russia, are immersed in Russian culture and society, and want to be with Russians in everything, as evidence of which she cites the fact that there are half a million Jews in the Russian army.<sup>15</sup> The two

<sup>10</sup> Sementkovskii, *Evrei i zhidy*, p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> *Shchit. Literaturnyi sbornik*, ed. by L. Andreev, M. Gor'kii and F. Sologub (Moscow, 1915).

<sup>12</sup> S. Iu. Dudakov, *Paradoksy i prichudy filosemitizma i antisemitizma v Rossii* (Moscow, 2000), p. 350.

<sup>13</sup> F. Sologub, 'Svet vechernii', in *Shchit*, pp. 162–68.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Russians who attempt to placate Sarra, Ivan and his wife, do so by asserting that Russian hostility against Jews is just something that Jews will have to put up with until Russians begin to see the errors of their ways (presumably after victory in the war), despite the fact that Russian persecution of Jews began a long time before the war. Often in pre-revolutionary Russian literature, the assimilating Jewess is expected to manifest unbreakable faith no matter what obstacles she face. Her ability to endure is intended not only to prove her commitment, but also to inspire Russians. ‘Svet vechernii’ ends by noting: ‘Неожиданная гостья сумела всех утешить и заразить своею, вдруг опять загоревшеюся, верою.’<sup>16</sup> The story therefore indirectly condones Jewish suffering as a result of prejudice through the figure of the Jewess, presenting it as not only an inevitable aspect of but also a valuable contributor to the war effort, rather than condemning it as an unacceptable legacy of pre-war Russia that is still thriving.

The features attributed to Jewesses in *Shchit*<sup>17</sup> and in general in positive portrayals in pre-revolutionary Russian literature tend to make them into ideal Russian women. From the point of view of assimilating into Russian society through their service to it, they are willing to serve it even under harsh and unjust conditions. From the point of view of their assimilation on the family level, these women are self-sacrificing and beautiful, and, given their capacity for servility and endurance, implicitly sexually available and presumably ideal housewives.

### **Going Against the Grain: Krestovskii’s and Chirikov’s Jewish Heroines**

The texts explored in depth in this chapter attribute similar qualities to their Jewesses but have a more nuanced engagement with the concept of Jewish female victimhood than is common in Russian literature. While Chekhov serves as an ideal example of a Russian writer with a complicated and ambiguous attitude towards Jewish assimilation and other political problems, the focus of this chapter will be texts produced by two writers with more pronounced ideological views that conflict with each other. While one can broadly label Krestovskii a conservative antisemite, Chirikov was a liberal progressive generally sympathetic to Jews. Examining texts by writers representing opposing camps gives a contrastive insight into the perception of the Jewess in the culture and society of late tsarist Russia. Both works constitute essential material for the study of Jewish women in Russian literature. Krestovskii’s *Zhid idet* is the longest text

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>17</sup> See additionally, for example, A. N. Tolstoi, ‘Anna Ziserman’, in *Shchit*, pp. 176–84.

in Russian literature, and perhaps in European literature, featuring a Jewess as its protagonist. *Evrei*, for its part, was one of the most performed plays during a major period in Russian and Russian-Jewish history, 1905–06.<sup>18</sup> Unlike Krestovskii, Chirikov himself in the play does not unambiguously promote a definite ideological viewpoint, which is borne out by the fact that directors staging the play gave it different interpretations in accordance with their own preferences.<sup>19</sup> By comparing the two works, this chapter shows that the question of assimilation leads not only relatively balanced but far from politically neutral writers like Chirikov but also tendentious writers like Krestovskii to more complicated and ambivalent portrayals of Jewry as a whole than one would expect.

Krestovskii and Chirikov differ with regard to the type of assimilation their heroines undertake. *Zhid idet* presents a typical assimilatory goal and process: the heroine, Tamara, is to leave her national and religious identity and attachment behind and join another, entering into the other society and adopting and fighting for its values, in other words, to achieve identificational assimilation. In the course of *Evrei*, we learn that Liia also had to renounce her Jewish attachment and identity, but the group into which she assimilated, socialist radicals, ostensibly professes not a Russian identity but a supra-national one that is blind to national origins. Chirikov presents an usual case in Russian literature: the Jewess does not merely fail to assimilate, but decides to withdraw from the society into which she has assimilated. Krestovskii's and Chirikov's works stand out among the assimilation narratives of the period because they question the whole idea, possibility and desirability of different types of assimilation through their Jewesses, putting them in extreme situations. While other writers brush aside Russian prejudice and other vices as blemishes that do not make Russian society an unworthy target for assimilation, Chirikov and Krestovskii condemn Russian society as a whole, while portraying exceptions, and posit the Jewess as superior to it.

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<sup>18</sup> Liubimova, p. 650.

<sup>19</sup> Mikhailova, 'Stsenicheskaiia istoriia', p. 259.

## 2. Krestovskii, *Zhid idet*: The Jewess as a Force against the Jewish Takeover of Russia

Krestovskii was born near Kiev into a family from the minor nobility.<sup>20</sup> He published both poetry and prose in the late 1850s and early 1860s, when Dostoevskii grew fond of him, impressed by his works' sympathy for the poor. Dostoevskii influenced Krestovskii's interest in *pochvennichenstvo* and his treatment of subjects such as the mending of the rift between the intelligentsia and the people.<sup>21</sup> However, their relationship later cooled for non-ideological, personal reasons.<sup>22</sup> Krestovskii's blanket portrayal of all those Russians belonging to the upper classes in his popular novel *Peterburgskie trushchoby* (1864–66) as corrupt, depraved scoundrels (with the poor as their innocent victims) reveals a tendency towards gross generalizations and a scathing attitude towards his own kind.<sup>23</sup> Other trends evident in both *Zhid idet* and the earlier novel are Krestovskii's pessimistic depiction of the evil characters' inevitable victory over the good ones, and his sympathetic portrayal of the plight of women. His antisemitism is evident even in this early radical work. Among his descriptions of areas of St Petersburg is the following: 'Близ Обухова моста и в местах у церкви Вознесенья, особенно на Канаве, и в Подъяческих лепится население еврейское, – тут вы на каждом почти шагу встречаете пронырливо-озабоченные физиономии и длиннополые пальто с камлотовыми шинелями детей Израиля.'<sup>24</sup> Although there is no sense of a Jewish dominion of the scale portrayed in *Zhid idet*, Krestovskii's use of the verb *lepit'sia* to describe the Jews' settlement suggests an alien organism that one cannot get rid of, an impression reinforced by his stereotypical description of the Jews' shadiness and their alien appearance.

Until the early 1860s Krestovskii was moving principally in radical circles, but after the Polish Uprising of 1863 his alliance was firmly with the conservative camp.<sup>25</sup> Some of the components of his new position are evident in his novel *Krovavyi puf* (divided into two books: *Panurgovo stado* [1869] and *Dve sily* [1874]), which he wrote in reaction to the uprising, and in which he accuses Poles of Russophobia and of

<sup>20</sup> Kabat, p. 145.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>23</sup> Iu. L. Elets, 'Biografiia Vsevoloda Vladimirovicha Krestovskogo', in V. V. Krestovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by Elets, 8 vols (St Petersburg, 1899–1905) (hereafter, Krestovskii, SS), I, pp. iii–lv (p. xvi).

<sup>24</sup> V. V. Krestovskii, *Peterburgskie trushchoby*, 2 vols (Leningrad, 1990), I, p. 73.

<sup>25</sup> Kabat, pp. 148–49.

attempting, in collusion with Russian nihilists, to undermine Russian state and society. He also reproaches his former radical comrades for what he perceives as shame at their nationality in their sympathy for the Polish cause.

### **Krestovskii's Jewish conspiracy and the Russian Antisemitic Context**

In his trilogy *Zhid idet* Krestovskii turned to what he perceived as an even greater threat than the Poles: the Jewish conspiracy for world domination. M. N. Katkov began publishing the first novel within the trilogy, *T'ma egipetskaia*, in his journal *Russkii vestnik* in 1881, but broke off publication after two instalments for fear of provoking further conflict between Russians and Jews following the murder of Alexander II. However, Krestovskii resumed publication in 1888 following Katkov's death and the appointment of a new editor.<sup>26</sup> The titles of the three novels within the trilogy are: *T'ma egipetskaia* (1888), *Tamara Bendavid* (1890) and *Torzhestvo Vaala* (1891).<sup>27</sup> Krestovskii never finished the final part. Overwhelmed with work after being appointed editor and publisher of *Varshavskii dnevnik* in 1892, he never fulfilled his plans to return to it.<sup>28</sup> While many found the novel of low artistic merit and unrealistic, others, such as a critic for *Russkii vestnik*, found it to be an accurate representation of the reality of Jewish dominion and saw in it the writer's profound experience of and knowledge of Jews.<sup>29</sup>

*Zhid idet* was written in the context of – and may be seen also as the product of – the growing antisemitism in the Russian Empire of the era, and also, more generally, of increasing Russian nationalism and xenophobia following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78. Krestovskii wrote the novel partly based on his impressions from his post as state war correspondent, which he secured following a distinguished career in the army that he had begun in 1868 as a non-commissioned officer.<sup>30</sup> Set in the late 1870s and early 1880s, *Zhid idet* amounts to an anti-radicalist, antisemitic and Russian nationalist tract in the guise of a historical novel. Apart from Jews, Krestovskii inveighs against all the European nations that feature in the work, but particularly against Poles. One of the

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<sup>26</sup> Dudakov, *IOM*, p. 126.

<sup>27</sup> Bibliographical details for the editions used are as follows: V. V. Krestovskii, *T'ma egipetskaia* (hereafter *TE*), in Krestovskii, *T'ma egipetskaia. Tamara Bendavid. Torzhestvo Vaala. Dedy* (Moscow, 1993), 2 vols, I (*T'ma egipetskaia. Tamara Bendavid*), pp. 3–256 (p. 29); *Tamara Bendavid* (hereafter *TB*), in *ibid.*, I, pp. 257–589; *Torzhestvo Vaala* (hereafter *TV*), in *ibid.*, II (*Torzhestvo Vaala. Dedy*), pp. 3–224.

<sup>28</sup> Iu. L. Elets, 'Posleslovie', in Krestovskii, *SS*, VIII, pp. 488–89 (p. 488).

<sup>29</sup> Anonymous, 'Novosti literatury. Vs. VI. Krestovskii. *T'ma egipetskaia. Tamara Bendavid*', *Russkii vestnik*, 10 (1890), 240–43.

<sup>30</sup> Kabat, p. 150.

trilogy's main plotlines is the takeover of Russia by Jews, who manipulate all spheres of life to their own financial and political ends, ruthlessly exploiting and ruining Russians of every class in their attempts to weaken Russian state and society and wrest power for themselves. Krestovskii's novel reflects his own views on Jews, encapsulated in a letter of 1879 in which he describes Jewish economic and political dominance and the Jewish 'race's' attack on what he terms the Indo-European 'race' throughout Europe and America, which has led to the latter race's degeneration while the Jews stand firm: 'Мы одряблели, распустились, обращаемся в какую-то размазню, а жид стоит крепко; и крепок он, во 1-х, силою своей веры, и во 2-х, физиологическою силою своей крови.'<sup>31</sup> In the novel as in the letter Krestovskii's attack on Jews combines long-established anti-Judaic myths with arguments from the discourse of modern racial antisemitism.<sup>32</sup> While 'Zhidovka' portrays the male half of the Jewish race as weak and degenerate but all the same as possessing an outstanding capacity to endure, Krestovskii's Jews are both capable of enduring and strong; it is Russians who are in decline.

The focus of the trilogy's second plotline, which both drives and is driven by the first, is the nineteen-year-old orphaned daughter of rich Jewish aristocrats, Tamara Bendavid. Brought up mainly by her grandparents, she has been educated in Europe and among Russians, and her social circle is almost exclusively Russian. In *T'ma egipetskaia*, Tamara's love for a Christian, the elegant and self-assured aristocrat Count Karzhol' de Notrek, and her longing to escape what she perceives as the oppressive and exploitative world of Judaism and Jewry, lead her to abandon her grandparents and local Jewish community to convert to Christianity, to which Karzhol' had introduced her by giving her the Gospels. In *Tamara Bendavid*, Tamara not only undergoes baptism, but also experiences what amounts to a second conversion when she serves as a sister of mercy for Russian soldiers in Romania and finally comes to understand what it means to be a Russian and a Christian. It takes a glut of contrived coincidences to make her realise that Karzhol' wishes to marry her only for pecuniary purposes, but by the end of *Tamara Bendavid* she has severed all contact with him. (*Torzhestvo Vaala* will be summarized later in the chapter.)

The opening chapters of *T'ma egipetskaia* take place in the Bendavid home. Tamara's grandfather rabbi Solomon, the richest and most respected member of the Jewish community in the town of Ukrainsko in the western provinces of Russia, as well

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Elets, 'Biografija', p. xxxvii.

<sup>32</sup> For an outline of Krestovskii's life discussing his views and works (including *Zhid idet*) from the perspective of his antisemitism, see Dudakov, *IOM*, pp. 118–30.

as the member of the most noble birth, invites another prominent rabbi, Ionafan, to make a speech to the eminent Jews whom Solomon is entertaining. Exhorting them to act on their convictions of racial superiority and their racial hatred of Gentiles, Ionafan spurs them on to continue their battle against Gentiles for Jewish world domination, declaring: ‘всемирное господство – вот задача и конечная цель еврейства’.<sup>33</sup> Jews are to achieve their goal of world domination principally through acquiring wealth, and through taking over journalism, the legal profession and the army, following the principle: ‘Не железом, а золотом, не мечом, а карманом’.<sup>34</sup> The applause that Ionafan receives for his speech and the actions of Jews throughout the novel, attest to the fact that his views are shared by the majority of Jews.

By quoting from the Jewish Bible and the Talmud, Ionafan gives ostensible religious sanction both for Jews’ racial hatred (an ancient accusation) and their plans for world domination (a charge that reached the elaborate scale it displays in Krestovskii’s work only in the late nineteenth century, with the circulation in Russia of ideas originating in Western Europe).<sup>35</sup> The narrator refers, partly through footnotes, to both Jewish holy books and pseudo-scholarly works that attest to the Jews’ evil intentions as he merges fictional events with whole sections of historical narrative, while commenting on events in the novel and on the deplorable state of European and Russian society under Jewish dominion. The novel thereby provides apparent evidence that the reprehensible beliefs and actions it ascribes to Jews are sanctioned by their religion. Dudakov considers that because of its portrayal of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world and its use of ostensible documentary evidence, Krestovskii’s novel constituted a key work in the literary background to the collation, publication and reception of *Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov*,<sup>36</sup> a work that was largely a translation and modification of documents fabricated in France constituting ostensible evidence of Jews’ world-conspiracy. Indeed, Dudakov claims that the initial proclamation in literature of the myth of the Jewish conspiracy to take over the world was essential to ensuring the success of the *Protocols*, an indication, perhaps, of the importance of literature in the formation of Russian public opinion at the time.<sup>37</sup> Krestovskii’s antisemitism represents an extension of the Russian conception of Jews as fanatics and exploiters, a belief that did not derive directly from the anti-Judaism that Russians had professed even in the

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<sup>33</sup> TE, p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> Dudakov, *IOM*, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

near-absence of Jews, but one that had taken root in Russia only after its acquisition of a large Jewish population.<sup>38</sup> These prejudices were partly a reaction to the reality of such phenomena as Jewish isolationism and alien customs, and to Jewish predominance in middleman professions, and partly the result of the importation of Western ideas.<sup>39</sup> The specifics of Krestovskii's antisemitism are rooted in recent signs of Jewish success and influence in a number of spheres, for example, the recent rapid rise in the numbers of Jews in Russian institutions of education and the legal profession,<sup>40</sup> and their entry into Russian revolutionary parties.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, Krestovskii also employs political antisemitism, which is a modern form of antisemitism since it would have been impossible before the establishment of political movements capable of embedding antisemitism into a political ideology.<sup>42</sup> For example, Krestovskii has his Jews advocate Jewish membership in both conservative and revolutionary movements in order to steer those movements towards the pursuit of the Jews' own goals of world domination.<sup>43</sup> The *Protocols* also posit this measure as an essential aspect of the Jewish world-conspiracy.

A further key component of Krestovskii's presentation of the wickedness of Jewry is his depiction of the *kahal*, which was discussed in the Introduction to this thesis.<sup>44</sup> In 1869 the Jewish convert to Russian Orthodoxy Ia. A. Brafman published *Kniga kagala*, which has been described as the most influential Judeophobic work in Russian history.<sup>45</sup> Brafman cites ostensible documentary evidence for the continued existence of the *kahal* as a separate Jewish state outside the Russian state's control, subverting the state as well as exploiting Russians and poor Jews. Krestovskii rehashes the work's ideas in the form of literature, and goes further to show how the principles behind the *kahal* are part of the very mentality of the Jews.

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<sup>38</sup> Klier, *IRJQ*, p. 124.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>40</sup> On Jews in education, see the chapter 'The University as Melting Pot?', in Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, pp. 201–56. On Jews in the legal profession, see the chapter 'Ethnicity and Civil Society: The Russian Legal Profession', *ibid.*, pp. 340–66.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>42</sup> See Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria* (London, 1988), p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> *TE*, 30–31.

<sup>44</sup> See Klier, *IRJQ*, pp. 281–83.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

### Tamara's Path to Conversion

When the reader is first introduced to Tamara, she is experiencing a mixture of alarm, awkwardness and hidden joy at seeing the source of her inspiration for conversion and the object of her affections, Karzhol'.<sup>46</sup> Tamara is naive in her failure to notice Karzhol's duplicity, but he appears to appeal to her through his status and confidence rather than through his Christian beliefs (in which, it later transpires, he is somewhat lacking). Tamara herself concedes in her diary that part of her attraction to Karzhol' lies in her vanity: despite her respectable family background, she wishes to acquire a title that will 'raise her above the crowd'<sup>47</sup> and she imagines how proud she will feel to have him as her husband.<sup>48</sup> Even at this early stage in the novel, then, Krestovskii presents Tamara's thoughts of conversion as marked by anxiety and her motivations for it as questionable.

Karzhol's refined 'European' behaviour and charm make him appear maximally different from his revolting Jewish competitor for Tamara's affections, her distant relative Aizik Shatsker, a faithless but patriotic Jew to whom Tamara tries to make obvious her lack of romantic interest.<sup>49</sup> Tamara may assume that Karzhol's manners reflect high moral values, just as in the stereotypically Jewish Aizik's obnoxiousness and lasciviousness co-exist with a ruthless hunger for money and power, as well as a pleasure in others' humiliation. However, Tamara's attitude towards her two suitors is partly based on snobbery: she rejects Aizik not only because of her lack of attraction to his personal qualities, but also because she does not consider him worthy of her, with her aristocratic lineage (which she claims can be traced back to King David) and European education.<sup>50</sup>

Tamara's lack of absolute innocence and goodness helps Krestovskii to fulfil his ideological aim of making her a believable, developed character rather than a lifeless vessel and fulfiller of his ideological views. Indeed, a specialist on Krestovskii, Grazyna Lipska Kabat, goes so far as to describe Tamara as the 'most complex and interesting character' in all Krestovskii's works.<sup>51</sup> One of the consequences of the depth with which Tamara is portrayed and the complexity of her character is the reader's greater willingness to engage with her ideological and personal reflections and judgements, since they are perceived as coming not from an angel (with whom no reader could

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<sup>46</sup> *TE*, p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> Kabat, p. 151.

identify), but from a sensitive, honest and morally mature human being with forgivable flaws.

Tamara's personal qualities and her unique position make her the most powerful weapon in Krestovskii's ideological arsenal. Through her suffering, moral battles and personal development she embodies in thought, deed or experience, and elaborates upon in her own words, all the points about Jewry that the rest of the narrative asserts, and does so arguably in a more convincing and forceful fashion than the purported documentation and historical narrative do – without losing her individuality as a character. For example, Krestovskii instils in his reader the notion of Jewish exploitativeness most compellingly through a shocking experience narrated by Tamara herself in her diary. Although most of the trilogy is written in the third person, halfway through *T'ma egipetskaia*, after Tamara has run away from her family home, Krestovskii inserts four chapters of extended extracts from Tamara's diary that relate to the period before her escape, and in which she describes her turning away from Judaism and Jewry and towards Christianity and Russian Christians.<sup>52</sup> The reader learns that Tamara began to hate Jewry as a society (rather than as individual human beings) when the *kahal*-affiliated organization responsible for burying her father delayed the burial and charged a far higher price than normal, ostensibly because her father, a 'free-thinker', did not follow Jewish customs, but actually because the leader of the organization bore a grudge against him and wanted to shame an aristocratic family.<sup>53</sup> Tamara explains that the reason why she began to hate Jewish society on that day was that she realized that it is 'slavishly obedient to the despotic institutions of the *kahal*'<sup>54</sup> and that the Jewish leadership is an instrument of enslavement and humiliation, with the brunt borne by Jews from the lower classes.<sup>55</sup> Tamara's initial opposition to Jewry is therefore rooted in the misuse of power by the most powerful class within the Jewish community, a class that, moreover, from the point of view of genealogy, does not deserve its status and authority.

Tamara's initial turning away from Jewry is all the more convincing because it is based not only on theoretical theological evaluation of Judaism and Christianity, but also on concrete experience of the exploitativeness of Jewish society. Tamara's

<sup>52</sup> *TE*, pp. 144–209. The use of a diary in works of literature to express one's views on the state of Jewry was common among representatives of the *haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment). See, for example, B. Val'dman, *Russko-evreiskaia zhurnalistika (1860–1914): Literatura i literaturnaia kritika* (Riga, 2008), p. 111.

<sup>53</sup> *TE*, pp. 163, 170.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

perception of the Jewish leadership's tyranny relates to her conception of Judaism's oppressive, 'dry' formalism.<sup>56</sup> Just as the Jewish leadership dominates Jews through its self-interested rulings, so Judaism itself oppresses Jews with its excessive laws. Tamara complains to Karzhol': 'Мне душно в этом еврействе, я задыхаюсь в нем!.. Я хочу света, простора!'<sup>57</sup> Tamara's conception of Judaism relates to traditional Christian prejudice against it as a backward, law-bound religion that forces its adherents to forsake the after-life promised by Christianity for the spiritual void of the death of the non-believer. Tamara shows that the Jews' mental framework, which is based on law and venal reason, is a form of oppression in itself, working on an individual basis by subjugating not only Jewry as a whole, but also each individual Jew's mental processes and emotions. When Tamara is discussing with Karzhol' the reasons for and against her conversion, the narrator explains:

Душа и сердце Тамары уже давно склонялись в этом отношении на сторону ее друга, которого доводы и убеждения еще и прежде отвечали этому сердцу ближе и симпатичнее, чем доводы ее собственного рассудка, почерпнутые из повседневно-ходячей практической морали еврейских отношений и быта и построенные на сознании грозного гнета, которым еврейский кагал рабски оковывает жизнь и волю и мысль каждого еврея.<sup>58</sup>

Tamara therefore believes that Christianity represents the opposite of the tyranny of Jewish life and that conversion to Christianity will allow her to escape the oppressive, inhuman mentality of the Jews and let love and faith guide her actions. She will be able to embrace freedom and the capacity for moral choices, rather being forced to make purely rational, practical decisions that put material considerations above all others. Conversion to Christianity and the assimilation into Russian society that Tamara hopes inevitably follows it therefore become in the novel a form of emancipation both at the social and at the psychological level. This psychological component is an original feature of Krestovskii's depiction of Jewish female assimilation.

Krestovskii uses gender to make his case for the possibility of a Jew who differs so radically from her co-religionists by explaining the phenomenon as partly a consequence of the Jews' womanhood, presenting a distorted reflection of the reality of women's exclusion from Jewish religious life that was discussed in the Introduction to

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

this thesis. Writing in her diary, Tamara informs the reader: ‘Еврейская женщина, можно сказать, живет вне религиозных знаний, а потому и вне религиозного развития.’<sup>59</sup> Jewish women are therefore less indoctrinated in Jewish values than Jewish men and less affected by the stifling Jewish mentality, facilitating their escape from it. Indeed, Tamara writes in her diary that Jews do not consider their women to rank among the ““chosen”, “clean” sons of Israel’ and that they are outsiders of lower status.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, Jewish women’s relation to Jewry as a whole is closer to that of the Christians, since both groups are victims of Jewish hatred; this brings Jewesses’ mentality closer to Christians’.

Krestovskii adopts a gendered approach to Judaism in order to contrast what he depicts as the exclusiveness of Judaism with the universalism of Christianity. Becoming a Christian and entering Russian society is to emancipate Tamara as a woman. As a Christian, she believes that she will be able to be the equal of her husband when she marries, instead of being looked down upon and restricted by a Jewish husband. She believes that, in sharp contrast to Judaism, Christianity transforms women through the Virgin Mary into the world ideal of all humanity.<sup>61</sup> Christ treated women as human beings equal to men, and this radical new attitude attracted Jewish women to his teachings.<sup>62</sup> Through Tamara, Krestovskii presents baptism and assimilation into Christian society as the only way for Jewish women to be treated as human. Although the trilogy does not depict Tamara happily married to a Christian Russian, in *Tamara Bendavid* Krestovskii portrays a Russian suitor for Tamara, Aturin, who genuinely appears ready to treat her with respect within marriage (see below), and therefore may be seen to confirm this aspect of Tamara’s idealization of Christianity.

Tamara sees in the equality, and even idealization, of women in Christianity foundations for it to act as the religion of peace, love and the spirit of truth, destined to become the universal religion and bring these qualities to the world.<sup>63</sup> Despite Tamara’s later adoption of conservative ideals, her aspirations for a juster world are similar to the broadly socialist aspirations of classic radical Russian heroines such as Vera Pavlovna (who shares her belief in emancipation as a woman as a prerequisite), as well as of the liberal Chirikov’s heroine and those of the unconverted and in some respects unassimilated revolutionary Jewesses discussed in Chapter Four. Most positive

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

portrayals of assimilating Jewesses in Russian literature have in common the Jewess's idealistic longing for justice, whether it be for her nation or for humankind as a whole, and whether it be cast in conservative, liberal or socialist terms. Hence Sementkovskii, who uses the Jewess to advocate socialist and not conservative views like Krestovskii, all the same shares the latter's depiction of the Jewess as attracted to the Gentile world because it affords her the freedom to pursue social ideals. Sementkovskii also shares with Krestovskii the representation of the Jewish world as misogynistic and as restricting the Jewess's freedom and her capacity to fight for such ideals.

Perhaps perceiving himself to be in dangerous territory as a conservative, Krestovskii reacts ironically to some of his heroine's pronouncements on the matter of women's rights and emancipation. For example, he presents with irony Tamara's stated desire to seek liberation as a woman and freedom from men. Tamara tells Karzhol' that if she were to get married without possessing any money, it would make her 'dependent and unequal'.<sup>64</sup> The narrator terms Tamara's utterance 'словно заученный по книжке урок'.<sup>65</sup> This echoes the reaction of the narrator of Chekhov's 'Perekati-pole' (1887) to the Jewish convert's explanation of his reasons for converting to Christianity.<sup>66</sup> While Chekhov's narrator casts doubts on the Jew's motivation for conversion, Krestovskii questions the genuineness of Tamara's more radical aspirations but ultimately has her more traditional moral and religious motivations for conversion prove genuine and well-founded. Criticism of patriarchal systems is fine for Krestovskii, it would seem, so long as it is limited to the Jewish sphere and can therefore be used for his ideological purposes rather than posing the risk of undermining his own conservative position. It is as if Krestovskii sympathizes with some of the new positions in society that writers like Chernyshevskii envisaged for women in the Empire, but wants to distance his heroine from those aspects that veer too closely towards socialism and threaten the foundations of patriarchy.

Another reason for Tamara's independence from the Jewish mentality is her immersion in Russian society and culture, towards which her exclusion from her own society and culture presumably further inclines her. She is educated in a Russian school, where her Russian language and literature teacher frequently uses her Russian as an example for other, non-Jewish pupils.<sup>67</sup> Without this contact with a non-Jewish environment, Tamara would never have escaped the Jewish way of thinking. Indeed, the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>66</sup> Chekhov, 'Perekati-pole', in Chekhov, *PSSP, Sochineniia*: VI (1976), pp. 253–67 (p. 261).

<sup>67</sup> *TE*, p. 33.

Russian language is one of her principal and most powerful ways of rebelling against Jewish culture. Since her grandmother does not read Russian, Tamara can use it as the secret language of her diary in the same way that Jews in Russia were considered to use Yiddish as a secret language against non-Jews.<sup>68</sup> However, the fact that the novel presents Tamara as morally superior not only to Jews, but also to the vast majority of Russians, suggests that it is not only her partly Russian upbringing that makes her inclined towards Christianity and what the novel presents as its superior morality, but also her own moral reflections and strength of will.

The novel's depiction of other Jewish women who have achieved a degree of assimilation into Russian society confirms the importance of Tamara's moral reasoning to the path in life that she chose, demonstrating that Tamara, as an impressionable Jewess longing for a role in society, had a higher chance of entering violent, atheistic radicalism than the sphere she did. Krestovskii gives the following description of how a radical Jewess (from *Land and Liberty*) incites demonstrators to commit violence during the 1876 demonstration on Kazan Square:

“Братцы! Идите плотнее! не расходитесь! Кто подойдет к нам, тот уйдет без головы!” – Этот последний призыв, сочувственно принятый всеми оставшимися, в числе до полутораста человек, выдвинул вперед молодую девушку, рыжую блондинку семитического типа, с растрепавшимися косами, которая, сильно жестикулируя, кричала с явным еврейским акцентом: “Вперед!.. За мною!” [...] Юная Мегера, кричавшая в расхлестанном виде “вперед, за мною” оказалась еврейкою Фейгою Шефтель, “готовящеюся” на женские медицинские курсы. Эта “благородная еврейская девица”, вместе с другими забранными девками, на ходу царапалась ногтями, таскала за волосы и хлестала по щекам людей, ведших всю их компанию в участок.<sup>69</sup>

Krestovskii describes this radical as lacking Tamara's love of refinement and beauty and possessing opposing qualities of hatred, love of violence and masculine aggressiveness. With her tousled hair and shrill, commandering voice, Feiga resembles

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, the use of Yiddish to draw maps for Russia's enemies by Turgenev's spy Girshel' in ‘Zhid’. Rozanov discusses how the Jewish script reflects Jews' secretiveness in *Oboniatel'noe i osiazatel'noe otnoshenie evreev k krovi* (1914), positing it as one of the key differences that Judaism has with the ‘open’ religion of Christianity.

<sup>69</sup> *TB*, pp. 336–37.

the stereotypical dirty Jewish mother of the inn rather than the *belle juive* whom Tamara embodies, and in her aggression she resembles the demonic Jewesses to be discussed in Chapter Three. Jewesses cannot therefore be relied upon to become committed Russians and Christians, even if they are exposed to a Russian environment. However, before deciding to convert to Christianity, Tamara had rejected nihilism as offensive to her femininity and idealistic sensibilities:

Нет, голый нигилизм, сам по себе, слишком груб и черств, он претит моему чувству женственности, чувству изящного... Стриженые волосы, синие очки, отрапанная черная юбка, серый плед и в руках лекции эмбриологии, – все это мне противно, потому что в этом нет идеала, нет красоты, изящества, поэзии нет, а я страстно люблю и то, и другое, и третье, и со своей прекрасной волнистой косой ни за что не расстанусь.<sup>70</sup>

Krestovskii finds vital to the creation of a right-thinking Jewess what he considers the ‘correct’ female attributes. Being female in itself does not make Tamara inclined towards Christianity, it is rather the possession of certain feminine attributes and sensibilities that does so. Only if she possesses these, it seems, can the Jewess be attracted towards Christianity and be inclined to adopt its moral code. Consequently, although Krestovskii presents being female and being exposed to a Russian environment as insufficient conditions for the fostering of an inclination towards Christianity, he presents the potential for Jews to become Christians as so dependent on the possession of feminine qualities that he implicitly excludes the possibility of a male Jew undergoing a genuine conversion.

On the one hand, Krestovskii undermines his own racial discourse by having his purely Jewish-blooded heroine prove that biology is not destiny: her race does not predispose her to hatred of non-Jews. On the other hand, he does suggest that the biological factor of sex plays a role, but is not sufficient alone. Furthermore, Tamara shares with all Krestovskii’s Jews the fact that she ‘stands strongly through the physiological power of her blood’. Will-power, one of the key factors that distinguishes Jews from most of the Russians in the novel, has been passed onto Tamara through her Jewish descent. The difference is that she has been brought up in such a way as to enable her to choose to use her racial superiority for good. As we have seen, her inclination to do so must be partly explained by her upbringing, which (since she was a

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<sup>70</sup> *TE*, p. 199.

girl) limited her exposure to what Krestovskii presents as Jewish indoctrination, as well as her independent thinking (also fostered by her upbringing) and feminine traits. Later in this chapter the possibility that Tamara's distinguished bloodline – which, since it can be traced back to King David, is presumably superior to Feiga's, who is merely described as of 'noble' origin – also predisposes her to choose the right path in life.

### **Tamara's Double Conversion: Becoming a Christian and a Russian**

By the time that Tamara has come to Mother Superior Serafima to request baptism and to seek shelter from the Jews who are pursuing her in order to prevent her apostasy and force her to return to her family, she has proven that she has escaped the practical, venal mindset of her nation and religion that she had earlier criticized. Adopting as models of faith the women who ministered to Christ at Golgotha, Tamara idealizes irrational modes of religious belief based on faith and love.<sup>71</sup> She concedes to Serafima, one of the few positive Russian characters in the novel, that it was romantic love that led her to Christianity, but persuades her that she does not wish to convert out of convenience, but out of conviction.<sup>72</sup> However, according to the ideology of the novel and in accordance with other works of Russian literature concerning Jewish female assimilation, in order fully to assimilate into Russian society, Tamara must prove her commitment to her new nation and religion through fighting and suffering for them.

One of the first distinctive features that Tamara's developing Russian national identity acquires is its exclusiveness. During the Russo-Turkish war, Tamara, now not only baptized but also a sister of mercy, begins to realize how at best indifferent and at worst treacherous other nations and peoples are towards Russia – even allegedly brotherly nations like the Bulgarians. From the ideological point of view, this represents a rejection of the possibility of a harmonious brotherhood of Slav nations, not to mention any pan-Christian ideal, leaving ideological room only for Russian nationalism. Krestovskii presents Christianity as bearing, in principle, no national allegiances: it is open to all who accept it and is therefore universal. However, by the end of the second part of the trilogy, Krestovskii has made Christianity as exclusively Russian as he had made Judaism exclusively Jewish by the second chapter of the trilogy. While Judaism's exclusiveness derives from its practitioners' racism, Christianity's results from the refusal of all nations except the Russians to heed its universalist message. This produces the intriguing situation whereby one can make the argument: '[Крестовский]

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<sup>71</sup> *TE*, p. 142.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

“позаимствовал” у жидов идею “избранности” для своего Отечества: его народ и Российская империя предстали противостоящими всему миру и всем другим народам’.<sup>73</sup> Krestovskii’s stated original plan to expose Jews’ assault on the whole ‘Indo-European race’ sits uneasily with his Russian nationalism.

Through Krestovskii’s portrayal of Tamara’s experience of the war he establishes the central features of his nationalism: namely, his people as spiritually and morally good, and as suffering as a result of the exploitation of that goodness by others. He also firmly establishes the main instrument of that exploitation, proving through ostensibly historical narrative the largely theoretical Jewish threat to Russians that was presented earlier in the novel. For example, he details the exploits of a Jewish company that buys up poor-quality local products in areas where Russian soldiers are fighting and sells them to Russian soldiers at vastly inflated prices.

Tamara experiences and understands the opposing force of Russian unity for the first time when she sees the tsar visit a dressing station during the war:

Государь в каждом шатре отечески милостиво, в простых, сердечных выражениях обращался к раненым и благодарил их за службу, а при словах его: “показали себя молодцами; сдержали то, что обещали мне еще в Кишиневе”, раздавался везде такой здоровый и бодрый отклик “рады стараться, ваше императорское величество”, что трудно было поверить – неужели это голоса раненых, из которых многие за несколько минут перед тем еще стонали и глядели уныло или апатично. Это посещение царя всех вдруг подняло и ободрило, оживило физически и воскресило нравственно. Откуда вдруг взялись и энергия, и силы, и готовность опять в бой хоть сию минуту! Словно магическая перемена совершилась на глазах Тамары: и те же люди, да не те!<sup>74</sup>

This passage demonstrates both the strength and the fragility of Russian unity. When Russians have something to fight for and when they have the guiding autocratic, fatherly hand of the tsar, they manifest their supposedly inherent qualities of dedication and self-sacrifice; without these, they fall into despondency and weakness. This message echoes throughout the rest of the novel, where Russian disunity and weakness after the war leads to vulnerability to exploitation and depravity. Krestovskii asserts that

<sup>73</sup> Dudakov, *IOM*, p. 128.

<sup>74</sup> *TB*, pp. 391–92.

conservatism and respect for autocracy are not only central features of the Russian nation: they are essential to ensuring the nation's very survival since they can resist the radicalism and atheism the Jews propagate in order to weaken Russians and further their tyranny.

Christianity explicitly constitutes the ideological and spiritual foundation for Tamara's understanding of and subsequent entering into Russian national unity:

Вчера и сегодня она воочию увидела и впервые поняла, что такое русский царь и русский народ, что это за сила и какие великие нравственные узы неразрывно связывают их воедино. Как еврейке, ей до сих пор это было чуждо и непонятно; как христианка, она сердцем своим уразумела эту силу и связь в настоящую минуту.<sup>75</sup>

Tamara during her 'conversion' to Russianness evokes the women in the Gospel whom she took as role models because they came to their faith through their hearts. In Krestovskii's worldview, Christianity inevitably incorporates the respect for the tsar and authority that the Russians need to fight the Jewish menace. Thus Tamara's genuine conversion to Christianity and her adoption of Russian values are inseparable.

Tamara proves her capacity to live up to these values. The night before the tsar's visit, she goes to bed with a feeling of tremendous achievement having served on the battlefield as a sister of mercy. Until that day, she had considered herself inferior to the other nurses. She had felt that her visible Jewishness caused others to associate her with those Jews who were exploiting Russian soldiers.<sup>76</sup> While she hated these Jews and knew that she was not like them, she had been unsure whether she possessed the strength to fulfil the role of their logical opposite: the self-sacrificing, Christian sister of mercy. However, after she has conscientiously fulfilled her duty on the battlefield, she comes to realize that she does possess sufficient moral strength to take on the role:

Опыт нынешнего дня был для нее то же, что для молодого солдата первое "огненное крещение" в бою; она чувствовала, что вышла из этого испытания с честью и получила спасительную уверенность в себе и в своих нравственных силах на трудный подвиг боевой сестры милосердия,

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp. 391–92.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 360.

— уверенность, которая до сего дня для нее самой оставалась под сомнением.<sup>77</sup>

Only the next day, with the tsar's visit, does she realize the full significance of her moral and physical battle. Through exhibiting the Christian and Russian qualities of self-sacrifice founded on Christian faith, she has become a person worthy of the tsar's gratitude, and therefore not just a person who has entered into Russian society but a 'good Russian'.

Tamara's sense of being divided between Jewry and Russian society decreases, an essential achievement given that Jews are effectively waging war against Russians. By firmly siding with the Russians in this war, Tamara rids herself temporarily of any sense that she is 'one of the Jews'; although she still faces prejudice because of her Jewishness, she can reject it as unfounded. By casting her in the traditional female role of nurse, Krestovskii ensures that Tamara's capacity to manifest 'Russian' qualities is associated with her femininity. Like Sementkovskii's Raisa, she becomes comparable with the countless Russian heroines displaying such qualities, for example, Elena of Turgenev's *Nakanune* (1860). Tamara's growth in strength of character is accompanied by a change in appearance such that she looks less like a Jewess and therefore implicitly more like a Russian heroine. Karzhol' had compared Tamara's beauty before her conversion rather unfavourably to that of his Russian lover, Ol'ga, a friend of Tamara's who had been unaware of Karzhol's pursuit of Tamara: 'Ольга всегда казалась ему красивее, пластичнее, пикантнее этой жиденькой нервной евреечки...'<sup>78</sup> The beauty of the *belle juive* had been marred by negative Jewish features. When Karzhol' sees Tamara again after her service in the war, however, she has changed completely:

Сначала он просто не узнал ее, — до такой степени, на его взгляд, изменилось ее лицо, его выражение и весь характер. В этом лице явился отблеск какой-то серьезной и строгой мысли, на нем легла печать сильной, но сдержанной, самообладающей воли, в каждой черте сказывался особенный нравственный закал, — словом одухотворилось нечто такое, чего и тени не было прежде. Она точно бы выросла и окрепла за это время, что они не виделись, и стала еще красивее.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 571.

Despite his racial antisemitism, Krestovskii suggests that Jewish female physiognomy can alter through internal transformation to become less Jewish and more like that of a Russian heroine.

Krestovskii does have Tamara meet and experience mutual love for a Gentile worthy of her, the courageous and modest Russian captain Aturin, whom she nurses during the war and who turns out to be Serafima's nephew. On the one hand, through Aturin, Krestovskii sets up Tamara as a worthy Russian heroine. On the other hand, Tamara is presented as somehow other to her Russian suitor's sphere: like Chekhov's Susanna but for entirely different reasons, Tamara represents something that noble Russians cannot find among their own in real life, according to Aturin. While Aturin's first wife appears boring to him with her good family background and good connections and their marriage seems ordinary, Tamara strikes him thus:

Она представлялась ему точно бы на какой-то высоте, точно бы осиянная каким-то светлым и чистым ореолом подвижничества и самоотвержения. В ней, казалось ему, есть нечто такое, к чему надо подходить с чистым сердцем и чистыми помыслами, с оглядкой, как бы не смутить, не оскорбить ее грубым или пошлым прикосновением к ее внутреннему миру. [...] в ней есть все задатки быть хорошей женой и матерью [...] не заставит опустить руки никакая жизненная борьба, никакой труд, никакие неприятные случайности или лишения [...] будет для мужа не женой-игрушкой, не роскошью дорого стоящей и подчас несносной, а действительным другом и товарищем на жизненной дороге.<sup>80</sup>

Aturin's meditations suggest that he would allow her to be a relative equal within the marriage (within the limits of the prevailing social norms of the time), a position that Tamara had stated as one of her requirements to Karzhol'.<sup>81</sup> However, in order to achieve this equality and the respect inherent in it, she has to live up to the demands to be a pure, self-sacrificing mother and wife. Krestovskii has Tamara abide by the standards of 'terrible perfection' and, although he does at least give her a potential husband of similar valour, no romantic relationship blossoms, and Krestovskii actually gives more attention within the work to a weak man typical of similar situations in

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 459–60.

<sup>81</sup> TE, p. 40.

Russian literature (i.e. Karzhol'). Following much nineteenth-century literature, Krestovskii has his heroine devote herself to society, not to domesticity, albeit in the stereotypical female functions of nurse and teacher. Tamara rejects the opportunity of love with Aturin because she wishes to remain faithful to Karzhol', only later discovering Karzhol's duplicity. As well as showing naivety, such composure demonstrates considerable moral strength since, although she is still unaware of Karzhol's deceit, he writes to her rarely during the war and she comes to understand that he does not represent an ideal man.

While Tamara does not represent a departure from certain aspects of the presentation of heroines in Russian literature, she can be seen as a kind of 'super version' of the strong woman of Russian literature, confronting problems that are distinct from and in many respects greater than those experienced by Gentile heroines. For example, Gentile heroines typically do not have to bear the burden of needing to prove their loyalty to Russian society and their rejection of their connections to the most despised groups in Russia, while simultaneously facing persecution from both sides. Tamara embodies to an even greater extent the Jewish female resilience exhibited by Chekhov's and Kuprin's Jewesses. Only an assimilating Jewess, possessing both the strength of will of the Jew and the capacity for self-sacrifice of the Russian woman, could get as far as Tamara does. Everything in the novel points to Tamara's being a stronger character than her Jewish female predecessors, just as the Jews as a whole are stronger than in most earlier works of Russian literature. The assimilating Jewess belongs to the nation that is currently powerful and influential and that is advancing. However, in the next section I examine how, by opting to assimilate into a once-great nation that is now regressing, Tamara made her failure inevitable.

### **Tamara's Defeat**

Having associated with the Russian aristocracy and intelligentsia and despaired in their descent into corruptibility and moral bankruptcy in the wake of the war, Tamara decides to 'go to the people'. In *Torzhestvo Vaala*, Tamara moves to a Russian village to become a schoolteacher. However, she is shocked by the moral state of most of the peasants in the village and taken aback by their initial prejudice against her Jewishness, although she soon manages to win them over with her Christian dedication to their physical and spiritual well-being and, especially, to that of their children. She does this despite the meddling of the local Polish-Jewish 'magnate' Agronomskii, who restricts

Tamara's teaching of religious subjects and Russian history, and imposes a radical, atheist curriculum.

Agronomskii, together with his mainly Jewish cronies, has in his corrupting hands the whole region in which Tamara teaches: he has turned its inhabitants into drunkards, forced them into debt, and impoverished them to such a degree that disease is rife. They do hold onto their Christian ideals, but largely do not live up to them; even the Orthodox Church has not been able to resist the corruption. The descent of the Russian heartland, perceived as upholding traditional Russian, Christian values, into this condition reveals just how dire a situation Russia has entered. Agronomskii represents the autocratic opposite of the novel's other absolute ruler – the hope-inspiring, health-giving tsar – whose portrait he orders Tamara to take down from a prominent position in the school early in her employment, a sign of the effective fall of the tsar and rise of the Jew. The venal, practical reason-based thinking that characterizes Judaism as conceived in the first part of the novel is the explicit ideal that lies behind the radical political belief that Jews propagandize in the last part and that Agronomskii forces Tamara to instil in her pupils such that they turn, in Tamara's words, either into 'loafers and scoundrels', or into Western-style revolutionaries.<sup>82</sup> Jewish reasoning transfers easily to the sphere of political thought. Now, however, the Jewish ideology hides its bid for power over Gentiles in rhetoric claiming that the exploiters of the peasants are the gentry, when in fact it is the Jews themselves who are controlling all aspects of life and enslaving the peasantry. Krestovskii uses his nationalistic, antisemitic rhetoric to preach his conservatism, showing that serfdom has been replaced by a form of enslavement that claims to oppose the former system but is in fact far more nefarious.

Tamara is one of the very few inhabitants who has not lost her resolve. She defies Agronomskii's control and attempts to corrupt, as well as rejecting his sexual interest in her. Her resistance may make her more attractive still to Agronomskii, and a perceived threat to him – a threat that can only be contained through his marrying her and thereby achieving some control over her. However, after she rejects his marriage proposal, he avenges his hurt pride by arranging for her to be sent to an even more impoverished and debauched village, where she falls ill with typhus. During her convalescence, she learns that she has been dismissed from her post. Almost penniless and possessing no other source of help, in the final chapter she writes to her grandfather, rabbi Solomon, begging him to send her even a small amount of money so that she can

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<sup>82</sup> *TV*, p. 91.

escape her situation.<sup>83</sup> Solomon is shocked when he receives the letter. He recalls that he had considered his granddaughter dead to him for having abandoned her grandparents and Jewry, and he fears for his own well-being lest he be caught corresponding with an apostate. However, in the final lines of the novel he warms to the opening loving words of his granddaughter's letter and begins to wonder: 'Разве можно сердцу человеческому не любить, не сострадать, не болеть о своей крови?'<sup>84</sup>

### **The Jewish Question as a Gender Question**

Krestovskii's last attack on Jews constitutes sexual antisemitism. Not content with his economic, moral and ideological control of the local populace, as well as control over their physical health, Agronomskii demands a kind of sexual omnipotence. The only way that he can bring down as morally strong a character as Tamara is by making even the most heroic attempts to scrape together an independent living and be of benefit to society impossible, through confining her to a hospital bed by indirectly causing her to fall ill and through directly causing her economic ruin, forcing her to make the choice: 'Улица, или могила: отданься Агрономскому, или петлю на шею'.<sup>85</sup>

On the one hand, then, Agronomskii's attack on Tamara is very physical: he indirectly infects her, and then makes her choose between effectively selling herself to him, or death. At the end of the novel, the physical nature of Krestovskii's antisemitism brings it deeper into the territory of racial antisemitism, especially because of its emphasis on infection. On the other hand, Agronomskii's attack has a moral basis, since it puts Tamara in a situation where, unless she turns to her grandfather for help, she is forced either to commit the sin and bear the shame of yielding herself to Agronomskii, or to commit the sin of suicide. The attack works so well because it is also an attack against Tamara's feminine dignity. Since Tamara's femininity contributed to her strength of character, the Jews attack it in order to weaken and defeat her. Agronomskii's attraction to Tamara reminds one that her will-power, which had been comparable only to Agronomskii's and other Jews' but has now been severely weakened, also derives to an indeterminable degree from her Jewishness. However, all her dreams of being able temporarily to lead a life without having to rely on men are destroyed.

Tamara's fate demonstrates the extent to which Jews have ruined Russians physically and morally. Krestovskii presents the Jewish question as a gender question.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

Mock identifies a prevalent trend in nineteenth-century European theatre whereby ‘the Jewess often (and paradoxically) comes to represent [a European] “nation”, drawing attention to its inclusive categories (and also their contextually-specific criteria) through aspects of her own exclusion. The female Jewish body seems to represent, time and time again, the body of the nation in specific moments of cultural anxiety.’<sup>86</sup> Tamara comes to embody by the end of the novel one of the paradigmatic gendered conceptions of Russians in Russian culture, as ‘a vulnerable, defenseless female victim [during] occasions of foreign invasion or threat’.<sup>87</sup> Her body comes to represent the last line of defence of the Russian nation. While previously she had represented something more powerful and vivacious than the Russians, now her identification with the Russian nation is complete, although she represents a different kind of femininity to Russians as a whole. While she remains a pure, self-sacrificing woman willing to choose death over a sexual ‘fall’, Russians on the whole are presented as submissive and easily seduced ‘fallen angels’. This echoes Krestovskii’s letter to Liubimov in which the Jew is described in masculine, phallic language (‘жид стоит крепко’), while the ‘Indo-Europeans’ (who in *Zhid idet* have been reduced to the Russians alone) are described as having become ‘flabby’, suggesting impotence and femininity.<sup>88</sup>

Although the novel’s main criticism of Russians is that they have *become* effeminate, especially since the Russo-Turkish war, it also portrays Russians as having always been in certain respects a nation with feminine qualities. Indeed, echoing Nietzsche’s implicit division of nations into the two genders in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), where Jews appear as a masculine nation, Krestovskii suggests that Russians are essentially a female nation and Jews a masculine one.<sup>89</sup> As is typical in Russian culture, Krestovskii conceptualizes the Russian state as male and the nation as female.<sup>90</sup> While during the war many Russians embodied truly masculine qualities of bravery and honour absent in the Jews, Krestovskii’s post-war Russians embody Berdiaev’s characterization of the Russian nation as dominated by the ‘feminine principles of

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<sup>86</sup> Roberta Mock, *Jewish Women on Stage, Film and Television* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 13.

<sup>87</sup> Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux, ‘Introduction: Lost in the Myths’, in *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture* (DeKalb, 2006), ed. by Goscilo and Lanoux, pp. 3–29 (p. 24).

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in Elets, ‘Biografiia’, p. xxxvii.

<sup>89</sup> On Europeans as alternately basing criticism of Jews on their perceived excessive femininity or masculinity, see Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, trans. by Rosemary Morris (Cambridge, 1993), p. 167.

<sup>90</sup> For a discussion of this concept, see, for example, Goscilo and Lanoux, pp. 3–6.

passivity and humility or even submission and servility'.<sup>91</sup> This explains why the Russians need the fatherly tsar to guide them, and why the Jews easily adopt the position of their overlords when the tsar's power diminishes. The Russian nation's femininity dooms it to fall into the Jews' hands. For her part, Tamara represents the danger of vesting all national hopes in a female nation. As a female, she can fulfil the essential roles of nurse and teacher in serving the nation, but not the masculine roles it also needs, such as those of fighter and leader.

### **Krestovskii's Exceptional Jewish Grandfather**

At the end of the trilogy Krestovskii highlights a character of positive Jewish masculinity. Employing a formula (a rich, pious paternal Jewish figure and his granddaughter) that should guarantee him a nasty male Jew to suit his ideology, Krestovskii instead portrays a model of unconditional love and genuine faith. Despite manifesting the usual Jewish features such as intolerance, Solomon has already demonstrated his capacity for a faith that is not founded on hostility to outsiders. In the scene in *T'ma egipetskaia* in which Tamara's grandmother Sarra dies of a heart attack during the pogrom provoked by Jews' attempts to stop Tamara's conversion, rather than presuming Jewish superiority (like most manifestations of Jewish faith in the novel), or cursing the pogromists, Solomon humbly insists on the supremacy of God's will.<sup>92</sup> In his review for the Russian-Jewish journal *Voskhod*, Dubnov considers the scene 'the best in the novel and the only one that evokes a good feeling in the reader'.<sup>93</sup> At the end of the trilogy, Tamara continues to consider her grandfather to be among the good people she has met and who give her hope at her time of despair; all the others are Russian Christians.<sup>94</sup>

Solomon's love for his granddaughter persists despite her apostasy and the fact that she indirectly caused his wife's death. Faith in God and love for those close to one are qualities lacking in Russians; their absence helped Jews to take over. Moreover, the most nefarious Jews are not the genuinely religious ones who isolate themselves from Gentiles but the cosmopolitans such as Agronomskii who lack faith in God and believe only in their racial superiority. Solomon is a hero for retaining his faith in God despite the general fall into non-belief, and in this he is closer to genuine Christians like Tamara

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<sup>91</sup> Robin Aizlewood, 'Berdiaev and Chaadaev, Russia and Feminine Passivity', in *Gender and Sexuality in Russian Civilization*, ed. by Peter I. Barta (London, 2001), pp. 121–39 (pp. 122–23).

<sup>92</sup> *TE*, p. 244.

<sup>93</sup> Dubnov, 'T'ma egipetskaia', pp. 23–24.

<sup>94</sup> *TV*, p. 216.

than the liberal atheist Russians Krestovskii depicts. Tamara's dream of her grandparents' conversion to Christianity earlier in the novel was therefore revealing although unrealistic. Moreover, Solomon becomes a victim of Jewish control just like the whole Russian nation, scared that the *kahal* will catch him corresponding with an apostate and therefore uncertain whether he should read the letter at all.<sup>95</sup> In a sense, his victimization is the most poignant of all in the novel, preventing him (perhaps) from seeing his closest surviving relative. He is a hero also in his love for Tamara: although the *kahal* – which controls Jews' minds – forbade him from experiencing love for Tamara, his love persisted.<sup>96</sup>

Krestovskii's presentation of Solomon and of Tamara's relationship to him problematizes Safran's reading of the novel. She sees Tamara's assimilation as undermined not only by Russian weakness, but also by her Jewish tribal loyalty.<sup>97</sup> In support of this interpretation, she refers to Tamara's comment to herself as she becomes convinced that she should write to Solomon: 'тут дело родного сердца, дело кровное'.<sup>98</sup> However, Tamara is referring to family ties not racial ties, and this argument in favour of writing to her grandfather was actually provided by a Russian friend. Tamara does not feel racial ties to Jews, but instead feels disgust at them throughout the novel: there is no reason why suddenly she should feel these racial ties now, especially given that she is trying to escape marriage with one of her race.

What Safran found in relation to other texts applies to Krestovskii's: narratives of assimilation tend to undermine accepted truths – even more so if the narrative features a Jewess. Krestovskii may have set out to write the book with the commonly held assumption that Jews possess firm tribal loyalty. However, while many aspects of the novel confirm this premise, by portraying an exception to it through an example of ideological assimilation Krestovskii laid it open to question. Rather than having her merely constitute an anomaly, through Tamara the novel illustrates other aspects of Jewry that undermine this assumption. While on the one hand the work shows Jewish unity and a homogeneity of thought due to a sense of shared origins, on the other hand it also shows the divisions within Jewry, for example, along the lines of social class, and demonstrates that much of the apparent homogeneity of thought is a result of the tyrannical rule of the most powerful Jews over the less powerful rather than of genuine feelings of brotherhood. Finally, at the end the novel poses the possibility that family,

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>97</sup> Safran, p. 100.

<sup>98</sup> *TV*, p. 220.

not racial, ties may be strongest of all for many Jews, even for ostensibly powerful ones. Solomon's concern that he is committing a sin by reading the letter and that he may be caught by other Jews, suggests that these family ties go against Jewish racial ties, rather than being intimately connected with them.<sup>99</sup> While feelings of unity based on race can be destroyed by apostasy, true ties of blood based on family connection cannot; while the former are based on asserting one's difference and superiority to others and therefore on hatred, the latter are based on genuine feelings of belonging and love. The negative stereotypes about Jews that Krestovskii peddled throughout the novel are countered in this exceptional case by the positive stereotype – widespread in Russian and West European literature – of Jews as possessing strong family bonds and great love for their (grand)children. Yet this in turn constitutes further evidence of Jewish superiority, since such qualities have not been demonstrated to this degree in Russian characters in the trilogy.

Further evidence of the text's sympathy for Solomon lies in the fact that what he experiences as an aristocrat within Jewish society is analogous to what God-fearing Russians loyal to the tsar are experiencing: dispossession by and loss of power to a group that has reached its status not by right of birth but by deception and corruption. Like Kuprin, Krestovskii shows a fascination with Jewish genealogy, and presents those with distinguished ancestry such as Solomon as deserving the respect of Gentiles.<sup>100</sup> He finds in the connections of Jews such as Solomon and Tamara with distinguished ancestors, first, the transmission of their great, noble qualities and, second, the consequent capacity to bring to the world a great new idea or to achieve a great deed, just as the ancient Jews and Christ did.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, in *T'ma egipetskaia* the respectful attitude towards Solomon of the Russians gathered to see Tamara win the award for attaining the best marks in her school (*TE*, p. 145). On the one hand, Solomon stands out from the Russians because of his attire; on the other hand, he exhibits qualities with which one can identify and which may even make him a sympathetic figure, for example, his tears of pride at his granddaughter's achievement.

### 3. Chirikov, *Evrei*: The Jewess as Dual Martyr

A prose-writer and journalist as well as a dramatist, Chirikov came from a landless gentry family. His association with revolutionary circles led to his arrest and expulsion from Kazan university in 1887; he was exiled and forbidden from residing in major university cities.<sup>101</sup> Although he reevaluated his former Populist values under the influence of Marxists, he never became a Marxist himself, wavering between a radical and a general democratic stand.<sup>102</sup>

During the revolutionary period when Chirikov wrote *Evrei*, his works were being published by Gor'kii's publishing house *Znanie*.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, it was not until the 1905 Revolution that he lost all hope in radicalism.<sup>104</sup> All the same, *Evrei* does reflect his growing disillusionment with radical forces, and the play is one of a number of works that he wrote partly to oppose violence as a means to political ends.<sup>105</sup> In the period of reaction after the revolution, he severed his ties with *Znanie* and followed the general trend towards the writing of less political works. He rejected the Bolshevik revolution, emigrating to Sofia in 1920 before moving to Prague in 1921.<sup>106</sup>

Chirikov stood up for the weak and oppressed in his literature. In his novella *Chuzhestrantsy* (1899) he shows, as he does in *Evrei*, the enormous difference in attitude between the radical intelligentsia, which accepts the Jewish heroine, and the Russian *narod*, whose antisemitism makes her attempts to 'go to the people' fruitless and leads to her suicide. Like Krestovskii, Chirikov shows the tragic impossibility under current Russian conditions of a well-meaning Jewess fully assimilating into and helping those parts of Russian society most in need of help.

A blemish in Chirikov's reputation as a philosemitic is the so-called 'Chirikov incident' of 1909, when Chirikov criticized a play on a Jewish theme, *Belaia kost'*, by the Jewish writer Sh. Ash at a public reading, to which Ash responded that Chirikov, as a non-Jew, could not understand the particularities and depth of Jewish suffering.<sup>107</sup> Jewish critics had reacted favourably to *Evrei*, yet Jews present at this reading praised Ash's play, perhaps giving Chirikov the impression that Jews had turned against him. The precise details of Chirikov's reaction were disputed, but at the very least it

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<sup>101</sup> Liubimova, p. 648.

<sup>102</sup> Bugrov, p. 392.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

<sup>104</sup> Liubimova, p. 650.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 648.

<sup>106</sup> Bugrov, p. 394.

<sup>107</sup> Mikhailova, 'Evreiskaia tema', pp. 180–81.

amounted to his assertion that in that case a play about Russian everyday life would be inaccessible to a Jew, who would lack the memories present in the Russian.<sup>108</sup> Certainly, any hostility that Chirikov expressed towards Jews during this incident is mild compared to the vitriol that Kuprin directed against Jews in his letter to Batiushkov.

*Evrei* (1904) was written in reaction to the Kishinev pogrom of April 1903, which is referred to in Act Three of the play as having broken out.<sup>109</sup> One of a spate of pogroms in 1903–06 that far exceeded those of 1881–82 in bloodshed and destruction, the Kishinev pogrom saw forty-one Jewish and two Christian deaths.<sup>110</sup> The play concerns the poor family of a watchmaker, Leizer Frenkel', who live in a cellar in one of the towns in the Pale of Settlement. Leizer's children, Liia and Borukh, have just returned home from St Petersburg, where they had been expelled from university for participating in student disturbances – an obvious autobiographical reference that indicates Chirikov's identification with these rebels. Much of the play consists of arguments among them and other young radicals over how best to resolve the so-called 'Jewish question'. The strength and feasibility of the various characters' political views are tested when a wave of pogroms reaches their town, and at the end of the play the Leizers' home. Liia's Russian suitor, Berezin, offers Liia and Leizer refuge from the pogrom, but both refuse to leave the house, apparently perceiving escape to be a betrayal of the Jews. Liia, facing certain rape and probable murder by the pogromists, shoots herself, only for her dying body to be violated.

The play is unusual in giving the Jewess a central role in a work concerning this major event in pre-revolutionary Russian-Jewish history. It allows one to explore what kind of attitude a liberal writer envisaged a largely assimilated Jewess as having in relation to anti-Jewish violence and to the various ideological conflicts among Jews of the time. A possible conclusion one can make is that the play opposes the total assimilation of Jews into Russian society not because it condones the Jewish way of life but because, first, unfair prejudice against Jews is found in all parts of Russian society (albeit in vastly differing degrees), and, second, assimilation inevitably entails turning one's back on one's nation at a time when it is facing an increasing threat. Evidence that the play was not just another politically cautious tale of a Jewess's failed assimilation

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>109</sup> E. N. Chirikov, *Evrei* (Munich, 1910), p. 91.

<sup>110</sup> Judge, p. 72. Other works written in reaction to and in indignation at the pogroms include Korolenko's sketch 'Dom no. 13' and Gor'kii's essay 'Kishinevskii pogrom'. See Levitina, *Russkii teatr i evrei*, II, p. 57.

consists in the fact that it was originally published in Russia in the March 1904 *Znanie* anthology without the scene of the pogrom, its full publication and performance being permitted there only in 1906.<sup>111</sup> (Its first full publication and performance took place in Berlin in 1904.)<sup>112</sup> Reactions to the play were mixed, with many finding it tendentious and of low artistic merit, while others, including Gor'kii, found it bold and even successful from the aesthetic point of view.<sup>113</sup> While some Jewish critics praised the play, Gornfel'd summarized his reaction to it thus:

Как агитационный материал, как средство привлечения к еврейской жизни внимания тех, от кого она – увы – во многом зависит, эта пьеса, быть может, сыграет свою маленькую роль. В этом отношении пусть ее ценят другие. Как художественное произведение, как средство проникновения в смысл и движение еврейской жизни, как источник самопознания, она совершенно ничтожна.<sup>114</sup>

The main characters represent the central standpoints of Russian Jews on the questions of how to resolve the social, political and economic problems resulting from their religious, legal and social isolation from Russian society and the legal and social discrimination against them.<sup>115</sup> Underlying each of these standpoints was a particular attitude towards nationalism. Frankel discusses the problems with national identity that the late tsarist Russian-Jewish intelligentsia faced. Those who adopted Jewish nationalism risked becoming or being seen as chauvinists, while those who adopted a Russian or universalist affiliation exposed themselves to the danger of abandoning their own people.<sup>116</sup> In the play, the first group is represented by the Zionist Nakhman and by Leizer, who is not so much a Jewish nationalist (and certainly not a Zionist) as a cynical Jew who has maintained the Jewish faith and traditions. One of the ideological conflicts in the novel is that between conservatism or traditionalism and change or progress. Leizer advocates and embodies tradition and the undesirability of change. He is concerned with survival in the world in its current state, and is opposed to risking

<sup>111</sup> Mikhailova, 'Evreiskaia tema', p. 164.

<sup>112</sup> Mikhailova, 'Stsenicheskia istoriia', p. 254.

<sup>113</sup> Mikhailova, 'Evreiskaia tema', pp. 164–67.

<sup>114</sup> A. G. Gornfel'd, 'Literaturnye zametki (Evrei g. Evgenii Chirikova)', *Voskhod*, 5 (1904), 322–29 (p. 329).

<sup>115</sup> See Christoph Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914: The Modernization of Russian Jewry* (New York, 1995), and Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*.

<sup>116</sup> Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, p. 3.

changing it and making matters worse. Described as like a ‘biblical patriarch’,<sup>117</sup> Leizer strives to secure a safe and prosperous future for his children, not begrudging them what he has never had. Although he distrusts non-Jews, he sent his two children to university in the capital so that they could receive an education and circumvent the residence restrictions imposed on Jews without a university education in the Russian Empire.<sup>118</sup>

The ‘universalists’, those who believe that the renunciation of all national attachments is essential for the foundation of a more just society, are represented by Borukh, the factory worker Izerson and Berezin. Many Jews in the Russian Empire in the late tsarist period experienced a ‘double alienation’, simultaneously isolated from and attracted towards their own nationality and its problems on the one hand, and a Russian or universalist attachment on the other. *Evrei* examines this phenomenon through Liia, who initially supports a universalist position, but by the second act is already wavering and feeling an attachment to her people.

Another character, Dr Furman, contrasts with Liia in such a way that he throws into light Liia’s idealism and the genuineness of her attempt to adopt or maintain the values and customs of her host society only if she can convince herself that they are morally superior to – or at least the equal of – the Jews’ and facilitate brotherhood, not enmity, with other nations. Furman realizes the negative stereotype of the Jew who pursues assimilation, including baptism, only in order to escape persecution and facilitate the accumulation of wealth, waiting for the day when Jews can reverse their relative position vis-à-vis Russians such that Russians will be the laughing-stock and slaves of the Jews.<sup>119</sup> Furman’s views on assimilation highlight the cowardly betrayal of her nation to which Liia has inadvertently subscribed by pledging allegiance to Russians and dismissing the distinctive traditions and features of the Jews. Furman advises: ‘Смеются при тебе над жидами, – смеяся и ты.’<sup>120</sup> The play consistently portrays assimilation as inevitably involving condoning antisemitic prejudice and the abuse of Jews: to reject one’s Jewish origins is to side with the antisemites while oneself manifesting ‘Jewish’ qualities such as cowardice and treachery.

One of the characters closest ideologically to Leizer is Nakhman, who contends that it is not worth Jews’ selling their Jewish identity (as has happened in Germany and France) in exchange for greater legal rights.<sup>121</sup> He believes that Jews need instead to

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<sup>117</sup> *Evrei*, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

assert their Jewishness in order to revive the Jewish nation. The Marxist Izerson, on the other hand, does not believe in nations at all, but only in classes, believing them to be the basis of all conflicts and of Jewish persecution.<sup>122</sup> He and Berezin believe that both the Jewish and the non-Jewish bourgeoisie are the oppressors of Jews and Gentiles, and that therefore oppressed Jews and Gentiles should unite against the bourgeoisie as a whole.<sup>123</sup>

Another key point of discussion is faith. At one extreme, Leizer asserts that faith is such an important part of Jewish identity that Jews should believe not only in God but even in Jewish ‘fairy-tales’ that they know to be false. Nakhman asserts the need to have faith in the ability of the Jewish people to achieve a national revival.<sup>124</sup> Leizer’s and Nakhman’s insistence on the need for faith in the Jewish people is associated with rejection of the (for them, naive) belief in the willingness of other nations to live peacefully with Jews. At the other extreme lies Borukh, who believes in historical materialism and considers any kind of faith irrelevant against the force of history.<sup>125</sup> The play shows that, while Jews such as Borukh can apparently discard faith, it is nevertheless a powerful force. For example, it is faith that gives Leizer the strength to face the pogromists while characters who prioritize a socio-political ideology over faith flounder. Furthermore, it may be because faith and the Jewish myths associated with it are such a vital part of the Jewish mentality that even someone so distant from the Jewish religion as Izerson indirectly asserts the need for it, describing Marx as a prophet who will lead all oppressed people regardless of nationality to Jerusalem.<sup>126</sup> To deny one’s Jewishness as Liia has tried to do is therefore self-destructive, ridding one’s life and aspirations of something that gives them meaning and that strengthens one.

### **Liia’s Uncertain Political Outlook**

The play ultimately shows faith in and dedication to her nation to be far stronger qualities in Liia than her capacity to argue for an optimistic, universalist worldview. In Act One, while Nakhman, Izerson, Berezin, Borukh and Liia are discussing the future of Jewry and humankind, Liia does not appear capable of arguing, or even of formulating original ideas. All she can offer are short interjections such as: ‘Нахман! Вы не поняли...’, ‘А Эмиль Золя? Золя?’, and ‘Неужели вы думаете, что человечество

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., pp. 29–30.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., pp. 26–27.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

никогда не сдвинется с этой мертвоточки? <sup>127</sup> Rather than forming structured, reasoned arguments, she simply objects and asks rhetorical questions. The closest that she gets to arguments are her naive platitudes about how science will bring about a time when all that is good and rational in humankind will reach its full development. <sup>128</sup> Liia's attempt at an argument does not relate directly to the subject of the conversation, and amounts to a cliché.

The men, on the other hand, argue using facts rather than questions and platitudes. In accordance with stereotypes about males, the male characters' arguments are largely reasoned. Although they express them in an emotional manner, the manner of delivery tends to support rather than detract from the arguments; it is usually assertive, often to the point of aggression. These differences between male and female speech relate to stereotypes about women as passive listeners, unable to participate fully in arguments due to their lack of rational, structured thinking (evident in the content of Liia's speech) and lack of assertiveness (evident both in the content of her speech and in the descriptions of it).

Act Two reveals that the uncertainty that marks Liia's speech may also be seen to reflect her actual ideological uncertainty – a position that the play shows to be justified. Having heard from the maid that pogroms have broken out in Bessarabia, Liia declares to Berezin:

Всякий раз, когда я услышу, что где-нибудь бьют евреев, я чувствую, что я – жидовка... И в моей душе начинает шевелиться неприязнь к... вам, русским, которые бьете нас... И тогда я начинаю чувствовать связь со своим народом, которой обыкновенное время не чувствую. [...] И я начинаю чувствовать неприязнь... даже... к тебе. <sup>129</sup>

Even if Liia wants to believe in the potential for goodness of all humankind, the reality of life in the Pale of Settlement disabuses her of this illusory hope. It is as if it is her will to believe in these ideals, but her experiences and knowledge of life for Jews in the Russian Empire make her realize that they are unrealizable.

During the argument in Act One, while the single Russian character Berezin's gestures are limited to hand-waving and his emotions to scorn ('с пренебрежением'), some of the Jewish characters' actions are consistent with stereotypes about Jews as

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp. 19, 21, 22.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

excessively gesticulating and approaching a state of hysteria in their emotionality.<sup>130</sup> For example, Nakhman is described as ‘strongly gesticulating and getting worked up’ and speaking ‘with a shaky voice’.<sup>131</sup> The little characterization that there is in the play that is not concerned with the individuals’ political views tends to rely on stereotypes about Jews, both positive and negative. Gornfel’d describes the play’s characters as ‘not even people, but dead carriers of various socio-political programmes and outlooks’.<sup>132</sup> One should add that the events of the play undermine most of these outlooks by demonstrating their redundancy and their inability to guide effective action in the event of a catastrophe, and that most of the Jews’ reactions to the catastrophe accord with stereotypes of Jewish cowardice and hysteria. Furthermore, during the course of the play one gains the impression that the forcefulness with which the males present their viewpoints reflects not only their conviction but also, in many cases, the fact that their views are at least as much the product of anger and resentment as the result of exercise of the intellect.

Due to her uncertainty and lack of conviction at the beginning of the play, Liia cannot be simply classified as a carrier of a given sociopolitical view. Liia’s feminine uncertainty has the advantage that, while the play shows the inadequacy of the other characters’ views and their stubbornness in not altering them, she is open and malleable enough to alter her views in accordance with circumstances and her emotions. While in Act One she appears to be merely a passive conveyor of certain platitudes common to revolutionaries about humankind’s capacity to unite and lose its self-destructive national divisions, Act Two shows her to have a far more complicated attitude to the question of relations between national groups, and in the final act she performs acts of greater conviction than the other characters.

### **Jewish National Sentiment**

Chirikov’s presentation of Jewish national sentiment is gendered. While Nakhman expresses his sense of attachment to his nation in a combination of historical, political and emotional terms, it is Liia’s affective capacity that dominates in the manner in which she becomes aware of, experiences and expresses her national attachment. Although Nakhman’s views have a prestigious intellectual basis, the play undermines them and shows Liia’s national attachment to be more powerful and enduring. Nakhman’s views are similar to those of the Odessa-born Jewish writer Leo Pinsker

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<sup>130</sup> See Gilman, *The Jew’s Body*, pp. 62–79.

<sup>131</sup> *Evrei*, pp. 19, 24.

<sup>132</sup> Gornfel’d, ‘Literaturnye zametki’, p. 325.

(1821–91), who in 1882 published in German the pamphlet *Autoemancipation*, which contended that Jews need to overcome their passive role in the historical process and, rather than passively await the granting of equal rights with Gentiles, find themselves a national home in order to become a proper nation and decide their matters for themselves. Once this goal is achieved, Pinsker claimed, Jews will no longer be the victims of prejudice, but will be respected by other nations as a nation and, like other nations, will be able to create their own history.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, Nakhman believes that a Jewish return to Palestine will end the injustices that Jews experience in the Diaspora.<sup>134</sup>

Liia's sense of and belief in national belonging functions largely at the level of mental processes coded as feminine such as instinct: 'Должно быть, в глубине души у человека живет бессознательная привязанность к своей национальности, религии,'<sup>135</sup> Borukh appears to lack this: superficially at least he appears ultimately to have assimilated more thoroughly than Liia, losing any sense of national identity. However, the play demonstrates that in reality Borukh has merely suppressed his national identity through opting to adhere to doctrine. Like Tamara, Liia exhibits the capacity to go beyond the excessively reason-based thinking that both Krestovskii and Chirikov attribute to the Jews as a whole. When Liia eventually appears to adopt a strong Jewish identity in the play, it is characterized by a hostility to Gentiles milder than that of the other characters with strong Jewish identities. Both Krestovskii and Chirikov therefore attribute to Jewish women a capacity to reach ideological convictions on the basis of love, instinct and faith that their male counterparts lack, and the writers in turn link this capacity to a greater tolerance of outsiders.

In some respects, Liia's Jewishness constitutes an identification resulting from an awareness of a common origin and shared traditions with her people, even if she rejects many of these traditions:

Меня не трогает наша религия и многое в ней кажется... нелепым. Но временами, когда я слышу, как отец читает свои субботные молитвы, что-то вдруг шевельнется в душе, далеко-далеко где-то там, что-то вспомнится

<sup>133</sup> See the chapter 'Pinsker: From Emancipation to Autoemancipation', in Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism. The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (London, 1981), pp. 72–82.

<sup>134</sup> *Evrei*, p. 35.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

свое, близкое, родное, чего-то станет жалко (*muxo*), и сердце вдруг заноет-<sup>136</sup>  
заноет... захочется плакать.

In other respects, however, Liia's national attachment derives not from a sense of unity with her own, but from a reaction to the hostility of outsiders, a feeling provoked by external events such as pogroms and being called 'zhidovka' by classmates at school.<sup>137</sup> In her explanation of her national feelings to Berezin, she says that she begins to feel a connection with her people only after she has begun to feel hostility from and, consequently in reaction to this, towards Russians.<sup>138</sup>

The fragility of Liia's sense of national belonging and its dependence on outsiders is demonstrated by the fact that, while studying in St Petersburg, she had forgotten that she was a Jewess because of the indifference of her peers to her origins.<sup>139</sup> However, while the play conceptualizes the problem of Jewish persecution as largely a phenomenon of illiberal environments, it also destroys the presumptions that the liberal atmosphere of the imperial university is founded on a genuine commitment to a universalism free from national prejudices.<sup>140</sup> Liia reminds Berezin that even he had invoked negative assumptions about Jews when he had recommended a male Jewish friend to a Russian girl by telling her that he was 'not like a Jew at all'.<sup>141</sup> Low-level antisemitism creates divisions even within this ideal environment: Liia had been so upset that she had wanted to stop loving Berezin. No amount of assimilation, even into the most liberal environment, can free Jews from prejudice.

Furthermore, Liia's case shows that forgetting one's Jewish origins when it is possible to do so is often an unconscious cowardly ploy to secure the comfort of not having to worry about the destitution and violence suffered by the majority of Jews not lucky enough to have escaped the conditions of the Pale. This is demonstrated when Liia recalls experiencing repulsion and shock on coming home following her expulsion from university and seeing a Jew in traditional costume, a sight that she compares to

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>140</sup> Chirikov's presentation of the late imperial Russian university as a bastion of relative tolerance is accurate, judging by Nathans' description of it as an institution in which discussion of ethnicity among students was considered reactionary (Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 241), and where the degree of inclusiveness (apart from in the German-influenced Baltics) was overall far higher than in Central Europe (ibid., p. 253).

<sup>141</sup> *Evrei*, p. 48.

seeing the half-destroyed, derelict house of her childhood.<sup>142</sup> Truly adhering to the radical ideals entails remembering one's own in their suffering, not dismissing them with disgust. Although Mikhailova argues that the play demonstrates that Chirikov believed that the Jews should 'preserve their religious and national distinctiveness',<sup>143</sup> the work by no means gives a glowing picture of the traditional Jewish way of life. It opposes the destruction of Jewish distinctiveness through complete assimilation, but, as we have seen, it also shows Jews as possessing such negative stereotypical characteristics as cowardice, fanaticism and intolerance. What the play actually advocates is the retention only of the minimal level of 'Jewish' features that Liia comes to exhibit such as her vague sense of belonging to the nation, not the fanatical dedication to the nation exhibited by other Jewish characters. It is precisely because of Liia's lack of ardent Jewish nationalism, her criticism of Jews and Judaism and her similarities with Russian heroines in Russian literature that Chirikov uses her to make his argument against Jews' losing their national identity. Liia has the potential to be a 'safe' advocate of Jewishness because she has very little that one could call 'Jewish' such as rigid adherence to the tenets of Judaism. Moreover, her sense of her Jewishness is unthreatening, leading to considerable unease and doubt, in accordance with Shepherd's finding that Jewish female radicals were 'often tormented by their Jewishness', attracting labels such as 'neurotic', 'hysterical' and 'temperamental' from Jewish historians.<sup>144</sup>

### **Liia and Her Relationships with Males**

Apart from their lack of clarity and conviction, a further reason why Liia's initial ideological views and national and political allegiances are subject to criticism and doubt lies in the fact that they are so closely tied to her romantic and familial relationships with men that it is difficult to distinguish them from her emotions. Mistaking admiration for love, she had once shared Nakhman's Zionist ideals, considering him her teacher.<sup>145</sup> She then replaced them with Berezin's ideals after meeting and falling in love with this new suitor. Unlike Krestovskii's heroine but in line with traditional views of women, Liia is largely unable to form opinions for herself. *Evrei* adheres to the clichéd, patriarchal Jewish father-daughter plotline more closely

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>143</sup> Mikhailova, 'Evreiskaia tema', pp. 170–71.

<sup>144</sup> Shepherd, p. 2.

<sup>145</sup> *Evrei*, p. 79.

than *Zhid idet*, with Liia facing the choice between the Gentile world embodied by her Gentile lover and the Jewish world embodied by her father.

However, while the traditional Jewish father of European literature merely spouted his hatred of Gentiles and his threats to kill his daughter as a reason against her marrying a Christian, in *Evrei* the father confronts her with the all too realistic possible future scenarios of Berezin or her children, as Russians, beginning to scorn her because of her Jewishness.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, neither Berezin nor Nakhman prove ideal partners for Liia in terms of ability and willingness to protect her. During the pogrom, Berezin stands by Liia, valiantly going to the Frenkel's<sup>147</sup> and offering Liia and her father shelter, which both refuse. However, Berezin is not able to prevent Liia from being attacked, and, moreover, he denies his stated self-identity as a Jew when he himself is being attacked, asserting that he is a Christian, despite his presumed atheism.<sup>147</sup> Liia's rejection of Berezin represents the rejection by Jews of the Russian intelligentsia because of its passivity and uncertainty in the face of Jewish persecution. Berezin, who had declared a Jewish self-identity because of his perception that he faced the same persecution as Jews, demonstrates the falsity, in many instances, of Russians pledging solidarity with Jews, and in turn the near-impossibility of truly standing by and fighting for an adopted identity. A further criticism of this Russian Jew-sympathizer is that, like Nakhman, he appears motivated in his radicalism more by resentful anger (at the inequality of the social classes, in his case) than by ideological conviction.<sup>148</sup>

Nakhman, too, fails to live up to his heroic self-expectations. In a conversation with Berezin earlier in the play, Nakhman had insisted that, in the event of a pogrom, he would fight back using his revolver, and, if necessary, would turn it on himself before allowing others to kill him.<sup>149</sup> However, the end of Act Three throws grave doubt on his ability to act in this way: having read out loud a telegram about the outbreak of horrific violence against Jews in Kishinev, he goes into hysterics and falls to the floor.<sup>150</sup> Chirikov has Liia scream and faint just after Nakhman has fallen down.<sup>151</sup> The juxtaposition of Nakhman's reaction with Liia's demonstrates what people subscribing to common preconceptions would perceive as Nakhman's feminine and typically Jewish weakness in the face of violence. Moreover, it finally removes any hope of him being perceived as a valid romantic partner for Liia: he has failed both as a potential male

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., pp. 85–86.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>148</sup> Mikhailova, 'Evreiskaia tema', p. 175.

<sup>149</sup> *Evrei*, p. 56.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

protector for her and as the carrier of the ideology of Zionism (which had once attracted her to him), since Zionism requires fighters in order to fight for and protect the Promised Land. The play presents Zionism as doomed to fail not only because of its assumption of antagonism between nations, but also because Jews are not able even to defend themselves, let alone to fight. At the end of the play, when Nakhman finally gets round to fighting back, he accidentally shoots at Russian workers who are apparently supporting the Jews. Upon finding out their identity, Nakhman throws down his revolver and begins to weep.<sup>152</sup> Neither the Russian intelligentsia (represented by Berezin) nor the Jewish Zionists are able to protect the Jewish people. Liia's rejection of both Berezin and Nakhman demonstrates her dissatisfaction with both the groups that claim to have a solution to Jewish persecution, but actually are able to do nothing about it.

Liia's return to her father therefore constitutes an act of national and familial solidarity that transcends ideological positions. The decision to stay with her father and subsequent suicide are acts of conviction unmatched by those of any other character in the play apart from Leizer himself – acts of conviction based not on ideological beliefs but on love and feelings of belonging. While earlier in relation to arguments about politics the play had depicted such motivations as unsound, they acquire validity in the context of the pogrom and the failure of the play's ideologues to stand up to their ideals. Earlier in the play Liia had allowed others to define her in terms of their own ideological positions. However, by preventing rape through her suicide she both makes an autonomous decision and defies attempts to take away one of her fundamental forms of autonomy: her physical autonomy. All the same, Chirikov lays himself open to censure for opting to demonstrate Liia's autonomy in the patriarchal terms of adherence to female honour, and the autonomy that Liia manifests is still presented in terms of her relations to men. Nevertheless, the significance of Liia's valiant decision not to escape the pogrom and of her suicide is not limited to the problematic socio-political implications of the threat of rape.

### **Liia's Suicide in its Contemporary Russian Context**

The play depicts Liia's act of loyalty to her father and her suicide as embodying a belief in anti-violence and what one can call a 'true universalism' – not the false subscription to a set of empty platitudes about the irrelevance of nationality but a genuine belief in the dignity of all human beings and a celebration of the particularities of the nations that

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

comprise the world, coupled with the realization that not all nations are accorded such respect and that standing by one's own nation may be the only way to ensure that these universalist goals are achieved. Commitment to one's nation that does not involve violence against others becomes the ultimate form of universalism in the play.

In Gomel in September 1903 Jews did fight back against pogromists with notable success: more Jews (twelve) than Christians (eight) were killed but the margin was far smaller than during the Kishinev pogrom.<sup>153</sup> This event was a source of great pride for many Jews, especially Zionists, since it demonstrated Jews' capacity to escape their victimhood and accusations of cowardice and stand up for their nation.<sup>154</sup> However, Chirikov either wrote the play before the events of September 1903 or chose to ignore the possibility of successful Jewish self-defence. On the one hand, he portrays Jewish self-defence as thwarted by cowardice and ineptitude (as when Nakhman shoots at alleged supporters of the Jews). On the other hand, Chirikov is also concerned to advocate through the Jewish father and daughter that violence against others, even in self-defence, is dishonourable, but that stoic non-violence can be a dignified strategy.

Lia as a woman represents the site of the Jews' greatest vulnerability: it is through women that Russians can destroy the dignity of the Jewish community to the greatest extent, by effectively forcing it to commit miscegenation, bringing shame upon its women, and emasculating its men by depriving them of the capacity to protect their women. Lia's suicide therefore represents her protection of her own dignity and symbolically that of Jewry as a whole.

Apart from the heroes of the play, Lia and Leizer, the characters either perpetrate or wish to perpetrate violence, or speak out against it but do little when faced with it, for example, Berezin. Russian philosemites and the Jewish community's young males are too weak or too ideologically confused to protect the community's dignity: it is for the Jewish female, with her lesser physical strength but greater spiritual strength, and to a lesser extent the Jewish father, to do so. The Jewish father and daughter show the possibility for Jewish victimhood to reflect not passive suffering and weakness, but dignity and fortitude. Leizer, having resolved to sit through the pogrom, defiantly curses his attackers and tells them to kill him, rather than begging for mercy. His mocking of the pogromists' alleged faith in God constitutes a form of non-violent retaliation, a protection of Jewish dignity and pouring of scorn on their Christian hypocrisy. Leizer remains true to his faith and nation by saying his prayers, thereby preserving Jewish

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<sup>153</sup> Judge, p. 105.

<sup>154</sup> This reaction is reflected in An-skii's *V novom rusle* (see Chapter Four).

traditions in the face of assault and presenting a direct contrast to Berezin, who betrayed his ‘adopted’ nation.<sup>155</sup> For her part, through allowing herself neither to become a victim of Russian violence nor to perpetrate violence against Russians, Lilia proves herself fully worthy of her status as an advocate of peaceful co-existence. Her suicide is both a protest against and a way of foreclosing Russian violence against Jews, although she can only prevent such violence from being committed against herself.

Morrissey finds that suicide for a group of prisoners in late tsarist Russia that she studies represented ‘the ultimate expression of their autonomy and [...] an indictment of the politics of autocracy. In effect, the inscription of power upon the individual body had been converted into the voluntary suffering of the collective – the community of revolutionaries, who claimed, in turn, to act in the name of the long-suffering Russian people.’<sup>156</sup> Three elements established above in *Evrei* are also found in Morrissey’s study: that of asserting one’s autonomy, that of indicting a form of violence that is made possible by the abuse of power, and that of doing so in the name of one’s people. The pogromists would have been associated by many at the time with the autocratic regime, which was considered to, and to a limited extent indeed did, sanction such violence. However, given Lilia’s uncertain Jewish identity and her ultimate wish not only for peaceful co-existence but also for union (including romantic and social) between Russians and Jews, her act, like the prisoners’, should be interpreted as revolutionary, carried out in the name of both Russians and Jews. However, the revolution it invokes is a peaceful one, a revolution in attitudes, whereby all nations will be accorded respect, since Lilia’s fate embodies the consequences of the national enmity that now reigns. Lilia’s conditional love for all nations, her passionate dedication and capacity for self-sacrifice make her an ideal potential member of any nation, or of all nations. As a result of the Russian persecution of Jews, her qualities of dedication and self-sacrifice, which she could have directed more productively towards universalist goals, have been directed towards the largely symbolic act of martyrdom. The play honours Lilia’s suicide as tragic but does not glorify it, as evinced by the fact that the pogromists continue to lust over her dying body. If in *Ivanhoe* part of the tragedy of the heroine’s refusal to convert lies in the loss of a potentially good Christian,<sup>157</sup> in *Evrei* the tragedy lies in the death of a human being able to embody the universalist views that the play appears to promote. In this light, Lilia’s body comes to

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<sup>155</sup> *Evrei*, p. 124.

<sup>156</sup> Susan K. Morrissey, *Suicide and the Body Politic in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 281.

<sup>157</sup> Valman, p. 32.

stand not only for the Jews but for the whole Empire, ravaged by hatred and violence and facing destruction under the violent forces unleashed by both nationalistic and radical sentiments.

Lilia attempted to assimilate into a group for which nationality ostensibly does not matter. Theoretically, everyone has to adapt and 'assimilate' into this group because everyone has to lose or attenuate his or her national features and make his or her features less nationally marked and more 'universal'. In reality, however, the group is closer in outlook to the Russians than to the Jews, so it falls on the latter to make the greatest sacrifices in order to adapt. Furthermore, even the most radical Russians exhibit signs of anti-Jewish prejudice, and they prove unable to stand up for their universalist values. These false-sounding calls to assimilation and universalism prove only to distract one from the harsh reality of life in the Empire. What proves truly universal is not the liberal universalist philosophy but the striving for human dignity that Lilia embodies: although originating in national and family loyalty, in fact it is a truly universal striving for dignity for all the oppressed, but one that can only reach its strength through being based on feelings of national solidarity. Consequently, Chirikov through Lilia associates a strong Jewish identity not with exclusiveness and hostility to outsiders but with an identity as everyman and a willingness to fight for all regardless of nationality. While Russian society is in its current state, the only way that Jews can hope to contribute towards the creation of this utopian society (if it is possible at all) is to maintain their national attachment and fight not for abstract concepts of universalism but for dignity for their own nation and others; not to promote the loss of their national traditions and features but to fight for Jews' right to be as they wish so long as they do not harm others. All the same, the play does not call for a passive, uncritical acceptance of the Jewish nation and its features. It highlights the inadequacy of Jewish attributes such as cowardice and hatred of outsiders, as well as the Jews' political development, and calls for change not only in Russians but also in Jews, using the Jewess as the model for this change.

### **Questioning and Upholding the Myth of the *Belle Juive***

The play transforms the derogatory socio-cultural myth of the Jewess as a sexually alluring *belle juive* into one that esteems her as honourable and dignified. In contrast to most portrayals of the Jewess in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature, there are no references in *Evrei* to Lilia's beauty until the pogromists are portrayed as lusting

after it at the end.<sup>158</sup> For example, while Leizer is described in the *dramatis personae* as reminding one of a biblical patriarch, Liia's physical appearance is not described at all, unlike that of many of the characters.<sup>159</sup> There are two key elements missing from the typical scenario of the Jewish patriarch keeping his daughter away from Gentiles: the emphasis on his daughter's beauty and his possession of large amounts of money (of which he has very little).<sup>160</sup> These two treasures functioned in European literature to attract the Jewess's Gentile lover, as well as to engender in the reader and Gentile characters feelings of jealousy and hostility towards the Jewish father or grandfather. In *Evrei*, there is no sense of Liia flaunting her beauty, as Rebecca does in *Ivanhoe* or Etlia in Kuprin's 'Zhidovka', in common with many of the Jewesses of European literature. Berezin appears to have pursued a relationship with her largely for her personal qualities, as well as in order to support his self-identity as a Jew. When Liia's beauty is remarked upon and when the patriarch's (insignificant) wealth is coveted, it is by the pogromists. Through replacing the traditional Gentile lover struck by the Jewess's beauty with pogromists desiring only to take that beauty by force, Chirikov's play indirectly demonstrates the greed and hateful, destructive urge that drives the Gentile lovers' coveting of the Jewish patriarch's two treasures in much European literature. Despite the play's belittling of the Jewess's ability to form rational opinions for herself, it is original in its refusal to paint her as a flaunter of her beauty. The battle of ideas and affiliations within her may take place through her feminine qualities, but until the end of the play her sexuality or sexualization plays only a negligible role.

Valman argues that the appeal of Scott's Rebecca to the reader 'relies not on her intellectual humanism but on her powerful and exotic sexuality'.<sup>161</sup> Liia's lack of intellectual consistency and her lack of sexualization make her appeal throughout most of the play lie largely in her capacity for love and dedication. However, if one reads the end of *Evrei* in the light of Valman's comments on the scene in *Ivanhoe* mentioned in the Introduction to the thesis in which Rebecca resists the Templar's violent sexual advances, the role of sexuality in the play takes on a new significance. Valman reads Rebecca's reaction of preparing to throw herself from the castle window as evidence that she 'flourishes most under persecution'.<sup>162</sup> The full extent of Liia's strength of will is revealed only in a situation analogous to that in which Rebecca reveals hers. On the

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<sup>158</sup> *Evrei*, p. 124.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> See the chapter 'The Delectable Daughter', in Maccoby, pp. 85–96.

<sup>161</sup> Valman, p. 28.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

one hand, Liia does away with the literary and sociocultural myth of the seductiveness of the *belle Juive*, showing that the sexual attraction of the Gentile male to the Jewess is not encouraged, but unwanted. On the other hand, there are limits to the progressiveness of the Chirikov's play: the Jewess's heroism is again ultimately presented in sexual terms. She may be the most valiant character in the play but the depiction of her bravery is limited to a typical gendered sphere, and to a situation that had become a cliché in literary portrayals of the *belle juive*, i.e. her subjection to sexual violence.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the late nineteenth century the Jewess in Russian literature became a battleground for various national and political ideologies. Indeed, in *Zhid idet* and *Evrei*, the Jewish heroine's body itself becomes this battleground. Although not fully assimilated, the Jewess comes to represent through her body not only the typical Jewess with all the associated vulnerabilities identified by Sartre, but also the body of the Russian nation (in Krestovskii's case) or of all the people of the Empire (in Chirikov's). So complete an identification (but not assimilation) has been reached between the Jewess and the Russian nation or the people of the Empire as a whole that Krestovskii's Russian nation and Chirikov's universalist collection of nations face the same threat as the Jewess. In Chirikov's case, regardless of which group perpetrates most of the violence and which group is the greatest victim of violence, the Empire can be represented by the figure of the assaulted Jewess, who in her inability to choose between ideologies additionally represents the Empire's lack of political or social direction.

Supporting Safran's findings, in all the texts discussed in this chapter, including those in the *Shchit* anthology and Sementkovskii's novella, the Jewess's assimilation into Russian society is presented as problematic. It is not the 'otherness' of the Jewess that prevents her integration into Gentile society. Indeed, in none of the texts examined is the 'otherness' of the Jewish heroine objectively an important factor. For example, none of the texts linger on her physical difference from Gentile women and the extraordinary and disruptive effects that this has on Gentiles, as the texts in the previous chapter did. Unlike in many classic works of European literature featuring Jewish women, such as *Ivanhoe* and Franz Grillparzer's *Die Jüdin von Toledo* (1851),<sup>163</sup> there is little sense of the Jewish heroines as themselves constituting the obstacles to their integration. The Jewess's capacity to change is not questioned, but rather exhibited as exemplary. On the other hand, the Jewess's lingering Jewish identity does play a role in hindering her assimilation in Chirikov's case, where her Jewish brother Borukh is better able to stifle his Jewish identity. However, such suppression is shown ultimately not to facilitate harmony between Jews and Russians but rather indirectly to harbour further

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<sup>163</sup> On Grillparzer's Jewess as possessing an erotic force that 'disrupts the social order', see Jefferson S. Chase, 'The Homeless Nation: The Exclusion of Jews in and from Early Nineteenth-Century German Historical Fiction', in *The Image of the Jew in European Liberal Culture, 1789–1914*, ed. by Bryan Cheyette and Nadia Valman (London and Portland, OR, 2004), pp. 61–74 (pp. 65–66).

conflict by letting antisemitic feelings fester; moreover, assimilation in the play is shown to be false.

Both works present the Jewess as stuck between two equally unviable options, Jewish society and Russian society (or in Chirikov's work a falsely pan-national society). They turn the problem of assimilation around and show that it concerns not the Jewess's ability to adapt, but the intolerance and weakness of Russian society. Krestovskii shows that the Jewess can change her values, attitudes and behaviour in such a way as to achieve ideological assimilation, but cannot achieve full assimilation into Russian society in its current state, through no fault of her own. By the end of both works, the societies into which the Jewish women had striven to assimilate are shown as too weak or intolerant to offer them the opportunities to pursue social justice that they had sought. Nor do the societies include any but a very few of the types of morally superior people whom the Jewish women had expected to find in Russian-Christian or radical society. Both texts emphasize the need for Russians to change more than the Jewess: for Krestovskii, this is the only hope of countering Jewish domination (it would be pointless to preach to unrepentant Jewry), while for Chirikov the 'Jewish question' is largely the fault of Russian prejudice. Works ostensibly about Jews become works that are at least as concerned with Russians. While the figure of the Jewess with her malleability and moral strength and appeal offers hope for the positive transformation of Russian society, she also demonstrates the impossibility of such a transformation through highlighting the lack of malleability of Russian society in *Evrei*, and because it is too easily malleable towards the Jews' wicked wills in *Zhid idet*.

At the same time that they extol the Jewess's capacity to change, the texts glorify her capacity to resist change where it would go against her moral values. Like Kuprin, the writers extol the Jewess's tenacity. On the one hand, Krestovskii's and Chirikov's texts portray the Jewess as possessing qualities dear to Russians and as wanting to use them to build a more just future for all in the Empire. On the other hand, they show the Jewess's efforts to assimilate as destined to fail and question the advisability of such attempts. Yet, paradoxically, the Jewess's failure to assimilate demonstrates her capacity to serve the society into which she fails to assimilate: the capacity for self-sacrifice and suffering manifested by the Jewess in her failure proves her right to a place in that society. All the same, both texts portray the Jewess as being driven and pulled back by circumstances towards the traditional Jewish family home.

Tamara differs from most Jewesses in literature in that her struggles for the most part arouse in the reader not pity but sympathy and admiration. While Liia falls into

hysterics, Tamara rarely even falls into despair or grief, but instead applies herself to her tasks, until the very end of the novel, where it is literally physically impossible for her to live any longer under her current conditions. While most of the Jewish heroines in the other works discussed in this chapter die (the ultimate sign of the impossibility of their full assimilation under current conditions), Tamara fights off death during her illness and does everything to escape suicide. She is remarkable for her drive towards life, finding a way out of even the most dire situations; it is Russian society that is falling into despair, misery and death, like the typical Jewess of Russian literature.

A comparison with Sementkovskii's *Evrei i zhidy* is telling. Krestovskii's and Sementkovskii's Jewish heroines have built up a resistance to the infection by the Jewish mentality that blights Russians because, unlike the Russians, they had been subjected to it throughout their lives and had been forced to find in themselves phenomenal reserves of will to combat its influence; they are therefore prepared to battle it in a way that Russians cannot. *Zhid idet* presents most Russians as having become either materialistic like the Jews but without gaining their cunning (thereby laying themselves open to Jewish exploitation), or as having become despondent and therefore being in no position to fight off the Jews. Sementkovskii has Vladimir perceive the Russians working for Raisa's father as having become Jews themselves (in avarice but not in cunning), an observation borne out by the narrative and by Vladimir's own falling into Jewish ways.<sup>164</sup> Both writers therefore portray a battle in the Empire between two assimilatory trends: the large-scale assimilation of Russians to the Jewish mentality, which has the upper hand, and the small-scale assimilation of Jews into Russian society and the Russian ideal. These narratives of assimilation, like Chirikov's, therefore embody general anxieties about change in the Empire.

The texts examined in this chapter provide additional evidence to that provided by those from the previous chapter for Krobb's assertion that 'The type of the "beautiful Jewess", and her relations to the world outside, can be used to make any comment on the "Jewish question" the authors want to make'.<sup>165</sup> However, they show more than the truism that the figure of the Jewess is malleable in writers' hands: they reveal the writers' own uncertain attitudes to matters relating to Jewry, Jewish women and women in general. While Chekhov may indeed have intended to explore his uncertain attitude towards the 'Jewish question' through his Jewess, it is unlikely that Krestovskii or Chirikov consciously made their works as ambiguous in their approach to Jewish

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<sup>164</sup> Sementkovskii, *Evrei i zhidy*, p. 196.

<sup>165</sup> Krobb, 'La belle Juive', p. 9.

matters as they are. The conflicting loyalties, dividedness and, often, sheer confusion of the figure of the Jewess allows the writers to cover up or at least partially accommodate their ambiguous and contradictory views with regard to Jews, to a greater extent than is possible with Jewish males. Seen in this light, the Jewess is no longer the passive and obedient tool of the writer: she defies definition and disrupts the writers' conceptualizations of Jewry, not to mention the very idea of nationality and identity, in turn embodying the whole ideological battleground of late tsarist Russia.

## Chapter Three

### The Demonic Jewesses of Vagner's *Temnyi put'* and Kryzhanovskaia's *Mertvaia petlia*

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter will analyse the portrayal of Jewish female characters identified as demonic in works by writers who attempted to demonstrate through their fiction that Jews were pursuing a world-conspiracy similar to that portrayed in Krestovskii's trilogy, *Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov* and various other works of the period.<sup>1</sup> In such works, Jews are depicted as taking over Russia and the world and planning to destroy the Russian nation through secret international networks pursuing goals such as: the control of political parties and governments; financial domination; the establishment of radical political groups to undermine state and society; and the moral and spiritual corruption of Russians. The last of these measures constitutes the basis for the establishment of the other elements of the conspiracy in works of the sort examined in this chapter. In such texts, Jewish women are typically portrayed as particularly suited to pursuing the moral corruption of Russian men because of their irresistible sexual allure and their extraordinary ability to deceive and manipulate. Jews of both sexes are able to achieve success in their campaign because of an innate evil that both drives Jews towards domination and destruction, and gives them the powers necessary to achieve their goals. A demonic nature, allied to unnatural powers, predisposes most of the Jews portrayed in these works to anti-Russian and anti-Christian activity, and allows them to overcome all the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that they face in their quest. It allows them to adapt to and drive profound social and political changes in the modern world, which the authors, being conservatives, regard negatively; the Jews are even portrayed as starting wars.

The first work to be analysed in detail in this chapter is the antisemitic and anti-nihilist novel *Temnyi put'* (1890) by Nikolai Petrovich Vagner (1829–1907). I shall then compare the portrayal of Jewish women in this work with that found in the prolific spiritualist novelist Vera Ivanovna Kryzhanovskaia's (1857–1924) novel *Mertvaia petlia* (1906). This work bears a more extreme, genocidal antisemitic ideology that

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<sup>1</sup> For a work just outside the main period on which this thesis focuses, see E. A. Shabel'skaia's *Satanisty XX veka* (1912), which features a demonic Jewess playing a leading role in the conspiracy, as well as an innocent one who has inadvertently fallen victim to the Jewish machinations.

reflects the different atmosphere of the time of publication, when far-right groups were enjoying great support and influence. A further reason why the two texts make for fruitful comparison is that, while Jews in Vagner's novel possess variously both demonic and recognizably human characteristics, Kryzhanovskaia's Jews are without exception portrayed as agents of the Antichrist, and their demonic nature is explicitly connected to what the novel identifies as their racial origin. Even though Vagner's novel is antisemitic, his version of the demonic Jewess is problematically presented, along with the antisemitic context in which the figure is embedded; by way of comparison, Kryzhanovskaia's version is crudely reductive. Moreover, while Vagner follows the traditional approach of portraying the Jewess as possessing sexual allure and the male Jew as repulsive, Kryzhanovskaia portrays Jews of both sexes as capable of luring and enslaving Russians of the opposite sex, levelling the sexes and lessening the distinctiveness of the demonic Jewess.

### **The Context of Occult Antisemitism**

*Temnyi put'* and *Mertvaiia petlia* belong to the tradition of Russian novels that Zolotonosov terms the 'subculture of Russian antisemitism' and describes as combining mysticism, occultism and antisemitism to create 'entertaining stories about sinister "Jewish secrets"'.<sup>2</sup> These two novels are partly a product of the rise of occult antisemitism that began in the 1870s and 1880s, as the radical right incorporated occultism into its antisemitism.<sup>3</sup> Occult antisemitism claimed to 'expos[e] [...] allegedly secret Jewish activities and conspiracies'.<sup>4</sup> It relied not on reason and evidence, but on beliefs in 'charges [that] were often fantastic, esoteric or even supernatural'.<sup>5</sup> The three principal charges that Klier identifies in his examination of occult antisemitism are present in Vagner's novel: ritual murder, the notion of the Talmud as anti-Christian, and Jewish fanaticism.<sup>6</sup> The Jews in *Temnyi put'* also discuss the alleged ritual murder of two Christian children in Saratov as if it were a fact.<sup>7</sup> The novel therefore confirms the blood libel.

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<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Zolotonosov, 'Master i Margarita' kak putevoditel' po subkul'ture russkogo antisemitizma (St Petersburg, 1995), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, 'Introduction', in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, ed. by Rosenthal (Ithaca, NY, 1997), pp. 1–32 (p. 16).

<sup>4</sup> Klier, *IRJQ*, p. 417.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 417.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 417–18.

<sup>7</sup> *TP*, I, p. 123. In the real-life case to which Vagner refers, Jews were convicted of the murder in 1860. See Klier, *IRJQ*, p. 419.

What Klier identifies as a comprehensive accusation that encompassed all the other accusations, namely, the myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy (which, as noted in Chapter Two in relation to Krestovskii's work, was essentially of West European provenance), is central to Vagner's and Kryzhanovskaia's novels.<sup>8</sup> Vagner himself was involved in spiritualist circles at the Imperial University in St Petersburg, where he was a Professor,<sup>9</sup> and defended spiritualism against attacks by various writers, including Dostoevskii.<sup>10</sup> Although Krestovskii's trilogy also attested to the existence of a Jewish conspiracy, Vagner's novel makes far greater use of occult elements, portraying Jews as involved in occult practices and, indeed, as themselves demons. Moreover, the protagonist reveals aspects of the conspiracy in an occult manner, for example, through apparently chance encounters and taking advantage of chance opportunities to listen in on Jews discussing their secret plans in settings exhibiting occult features. In Vagner's short story 'Mirra' (1887) – which is not one of the main texts that I examine in this chapter but which I discuss below – the Jewess attributes the Jews' privileged access to secrets not only to gold (from which one might extrapolate that they control the economy, as well as engage in bribery and corruption) but also to an 'otherworldly wisdom', thereby combining common Jewish stereotypes with elements of the occult.<sup>11</sup>

Cohn notes that the attribution of 'uncanny, sinister powers' to Jews dates back to early Christianity.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, many of the Church Fathers preached that the Antichrist whose coming is foretold by the Book of Revelation would be a Jew, and from the first crusade the belief that Jews were under Satan's command to combat Christianity and harm Christians gained prominence.<sup>13</sup> Persecution in the Middle Ages exacerbated Jewish exclusiveness, such that 'in the eyes of most Christians these strange creatures were demons in human form'.<sup>14</sup> All these myths were present in Russia; indeed, Laqueur argues that such myths were more powerful and long-lasting

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 417–18.

<sup>9</sup> Maria Carlson, 'Fashionable Occultism: Spiritualism, Theosophy, Freemasonry, and Hermeticism in Fin-de-Siècle Russia', in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, pp. 135–52 (p. 137). Vagner achieved worldwide fame as a zoologist when he discovered paedogenesis in 1862. See Mil'don, pp. 385–86.

<sup>10</sup> Mil'don, 'Vagner', p. 385.

<sup>11</sup> Kot-Murlyka [N. P. Vagner], 'Mirra', in *Povesti, skazki i rasskazy Kota-Murlyki. Tom pervyyi* (St Petersburg, 1887), pp. 266–91 (p. 278).

<sup>12</sup> Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London, 1996), p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 25–26.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

there than in Western Europe.<sup>15</sup> However, as discussed in Chapter Two, the myth of a Jewish conspiracy pursued through political means is a modern phenomenon. Cohn therefore concludes that ‘the myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy represents a modern adaptation of ancient demonological tradition’.<sup>16</sup> Vagner and Kryzhanovskaia and others writing in the same antisemitic tradition make a direct association between the conspiracy and Jews’ demonic powers, such that the international Jewish government itself constitutes not an incredibly powerful yet earthly force but a ‘higher will’.<sup>17</sup> Right-wing antisemites with occultist leanings saw phenomena such as capitalism, radicalism, female emancipation and promiscuity as repellent aspects of modernity that were the result of demonic forces at work in society and which aided the conspirators by weakening public morals and national solidarity. Since such antisemites continued the ancient tradition of seeing Jews as ‘uncanny, semi-demonic beings’,<sup>18</sup> and since Jews could readily be associated with these modern phenomena, Jews came to be seen as embodying the demonic forces that drove them, with Jewish women considered particularly suited to embodying the temptations that these phenomena offered Russians, as this chapter shows. In the wake of the 1905 Revolution, this perception of Jews culminated in a situation of blanket attribution of blame: ‘Every catastrophe that had befallen Russia, including the Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905, was blamed on the Satanic or demonic Jews and their henchmen.’<sup>19</sup> The place of the Jews in such a view of Russia during that era is examined in this chapter through Kryzhanovskaia’s novel.

In this connection, Cohn finds in the myth of the Jewish conspiracy an expression of anxiety and resentment at social change.<sup>20</sup> It is probably not by chance that the particular rise of Russian conservatism and nationalism in the late nineteenth century coincided with an increase in interest in the occult. The conditions that tend to precipitate a rise in nationalist sentiments, and generally political uncertainty and furore, also tend to lead to an increase in interest in the occult. Rosenthal explains: ‘The occultism that flourishes in such periods [of political and social upheaval, cultural confusion, and spiritual quest] can be seen as a response to the spiritual disorientation

<sup>15</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York, 1993), pp. 54–57.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Zolotonosov, pp. 8–9.

<sup>18</sup> Cohn, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ‘Political Implications of the Occult Revival’, in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, pp. 379–418 (p. 382).

<sup>20</sup> Cohn, p. 27.

and cultural confusion that accompanies the death of the myth (the dominant belief).<sup>21</sup> Rosenthal attributes the rise in interest in the occult in late nineteenth-century Russia to the same reasons identified in earlier sections of the thesis for the rise in nationalism and antisemitism, among them: the Crimean War, the abolition of serfdom, the development of the revolutionary intelligentsia and terror, culminating in the assassination of Alexander II and two decades of reaction.<sup>22</sup> Crudely speaking, both antisemitism and occultism give one a means to explain a world that traditional beliefs can no longer sufficiently explain. Rogger comments:

Judeophobia was to be the catechism and ritual murder the *credo quia absurdum* which would make possible a comprehensive attitude not only toward Jews, but toward men in general, history in general, toward history and society. Antisemitism was to become, in Sartre's words, at one and the same time a passion and a conception of the world.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Demonic Jewess in Russian Literature**

One finds demonic Jewish women not only in late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Russian literature, but also in texts from the first half of the nineteenth century. In E. P. Grebenka's (1812–48) *Chaikovskii* (1843) a demonic Jewish mother, Rokhl', hates Christians so much that she murders them through poisoning them. Grebenka demonizes her by having her disguise herself as a witch-doctor, laugh and sing by her victims' graves at night, and, most explicitly, possess (according to the person narrating the story about her) an 'evil spirit' that makes it impossible to stop her.<sup>24</sup> The Jewish witch is by no means an exclusively negative figure in Russian literature, however. For example, in *Taras Bul'ba* one such practitioner appears to restore the hero's health with potions, and the Jewish mother of Staniukovich's *Pokhozhdeniaia odnogo matrosa* is able to use her magical powers for both good and (at the behest of her husband) evil.

Bulgarin in his *Vospominaniia* (1846–49) compared Jews and Jewesses to demons perverting and blackening the consciences and souls of young women as they turn them to prostitution:

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<sup>21</sup> Rosenthal, 'Introduction', p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986), p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> E. Grebenka, *Chaikovskii* (Kiev, 1959), p. 113.

Гнусные люди, большою частью евреи и еврейки, торгующие падшими существами, как демоны хватают немедленно несчастную жертву в свои когти, развращают ее воображение, усыпляют совесть, заглушают стыд и затмевают слабый ум приманками мишуруной роскоши и обманчивой будущности – и губят навеки! [...] Всегда почти причиной падения были обман и клятвопреступничество мужчины!<sup>25</sup>

To be sure, Bulgarin later suggests that Jews' attraction to economic exploitation is partly the fault of Gentiles, who should re-educate Jews through Enlightenment ideas.<sup>26</sup>

The Jews in the texts discussed in this chapter also manipulate the morally corrupting forces of covetousness and lust to enslave non-Jews, but there are none of the liberal solutions proffered by Bulgarin. Jewish women play a central role in the Jewish plot for world domination: they corrupt (mainly male) Russians and lure them into dark Jewish machinations. One aspect that the demonic Jewesses examined in this chapter have in common with Grebenka's Rokhl' is the near-impossibility of stopping them, only in this case it is their sexual allure that exerts a terrible control: it is so powerful that it continues to enslave Russian men even when they know the nefarious purposes that it serves.

Given Dudakov's identification of *Temnyi put'* as a key text in the background to the compilation of the *Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov*, it is telling to note that the early Russian editions of the *Protocols* that were published during the period 1903–06 attested to the unique power of Jewish women to bring 'spiritual demoralization' and 'moral corruption' to the states of Europe through luring men in leadership positions into licentiousness. Furthermore, these versions of the *Protocols* contend, Jewish women are able to enslave such men through getting them into debt to Jews, presumably by prostituting themselves to them at high prices and deceiving them into giving away their money, which is then passed on to the Jews.<sup>27</sup> This is precisely what Jewesses do in Vagner's novel. The *Protocols* also maintain that the Jewesses must hide their actual roles and affiliation, for example, by masquerading as Frenchwomen and Italians.<sup>28</sup> Vagner's Jewesses also engage in deceiving their victims with their appearance and by creating the impression that they are different to what they actually are; while Vagner's male Jews do the same, the women's disguise is intended namely to

<sup>25</sup> F. Bulgarin, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 2001), p. 277.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>27</sup> Cohn, p. 296.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

attract Russian men sexually to them. In *Mertvaia petlia* Jews of both sexes construct false personalities in order to lure Russians – only to humiliate or commit violence against them. The manuscript that the compiler of the *Protocols*, Nilus, submitted to the censor in 1903 named Bernhardt as a Jewess employed by the international Jewish network, but the censor subsequently removed her name.<sup>29</sup> This demonstrates the belief in nineteenth- and twentieth-century antisemitic circles that prominent Jewish female figures such as Bernhardt had a vital role in the Jewish conspiracy, and helps to explain the prominence that Wagner gives a character whom he partly bases on her. The notion that Jewish women lured men into moral corruption and participation in subversion against society and the state through their sexual attractiveness persisted throughout the pre-revolutionary period. For example, in 1914 the right-wing Duma deputy and the driving force behind the extreme right-wing antisemitic group Soiuz russkogo naroda (SRN) Vladimir Purishkevich wrote of ‘female sexuality as the most potent instrument of Jewish revolutionary subversion’ and bewailed, ‘How many pure young lives have succumbed in the revolutionary wave, enticed by the mirage of Yid female charms!'<sup>30</sup>

Writers in late tsarist Russia used their depictions of Jewish women to extend the connection made by Russian anti-nihilist writers between radicalism and crime and in, for example, Dostoevskii’s case, radicalism and evil, in order to incorporate extreme nationalism, antisemitism and hatred of the phenomenon of the ‘new woman’. The demonic Jewess thus constitutes for the writers examined in this chapter a construct against which they can define their Russian characters as belonging to a certain nation, class and faith and, because of these attributes, as possessing certain moral strengths and weaknesses. Most important for these writers, the construct of the demonic Jewess compels the reader to live up to the high standards of morality that the authors posit as fitting of the Russian nation and essential to its future survival and the revival of its former greatness. The demonic Jewess is thus used both to construct Russian identity and to formulate and promote a programme for the maintenance and advancement of that identity.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>30</sup> V. M. Purishkevich, *Materialy po voprosu o razlozhennii sovremennoi russkogo universiteta* (St Petersburg, 1914), pp. 35–37. Quoted in Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca and London, 1992), p. 313.

## 2. Nikolai Vagner's *Temnyi put'*

Before analysing the longer works by Vagner and Kryzhanovskaia, I shall examine a short story by Vagner written under his pseudonym Kot-Murlyka, 'Mirra' (1887), in order to illustrate through a focused case study some of the typical features of works of late tsarist Russian literature portraying the demonic Jewess. The story features the motif that we have already identified as common to such works, and central to the myth of the Jewish conspiracy, of the demonic Jewess attempting to lure a Russian nobleman into advancing the Jews' takeover of the world. Prince Sgaborskii accepts the offer of a beautiful Jewess, Mirra, to possess her and receive seven million roubles and 'perform a great, holy deed' on the condition that he trust her.<sup>31</sup> The prince performs the first two tasks but refuses to undertake the third, which turns out to consist in his stamping on the cross that he is wearing in order to prove his atheism. His refusal is apparently prompted by a sudden vision of Christ, who appears meek and loving.<sup>32</sup> Presumably, Mirra intends for the Christian renunciation of God to assist the Jewish take-over of the world. The Jewess is therefore portrayed as a handmaiden of the anti-Christ, tempting Sgaborskii like Satan tempted Jesus in the desert. Even her beauty and sexual attractiveness are identified as a force of the anti-Christ; Sgaborskii perceives them as lowly and worthless compared to Christ's love.<sup>33</sup> Jews and Judaism are thus identified as waging war against Christianity through sexuality. Sgaborskii also perceives the Jewess as a force opposing humanity as a whole, since he sees Christ and Christianity as the true path to love of all humanity.<sup>34</sup>

Mirra had tempted Sgaborskii with something similarly grand to Satan's offer to Jesus of all the kingdoms of the world, claiming that her main goal was to unite all the nations into one 'brotherly family' through Sgaborskii because, while her blood represents a mixture of almost all the nations of the east, Sgaborskii's lineage comprises most of the western nations.<sup>35</sup> The story associates miscegenation between Russians or Gentiles and Jews with the renunciation of God, thereby introducing an explicitly racist component to Russian literary occult antisemitism, since Vagner depicts miscegenation as having significance for secret, otherworldly Jewish activities intended to destroy Christian civilization. Moreover, sexual involvement with Jewish women is shown to

<sup>31</sup> Kot-Murlyka [N. P. Vagner], 'Mirra', in *Povesti, skazki i rasskazy Kota-Murlyki. Tom pervyyi* (St Petersburg, 1887), pp. 266–91 (p. 267).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 279–80.

bring ruin to the Russian nobility: the experience leaves Sgaborskii with severe melancholia and anxiety attacks, and his family's distinguished and long line ends with his death.<sup>36</sup> The story therefore associates miscegenation with disease, drawing on perceptions in Europe of Jews as transmitters of diseases, especially venereal ones.<sup>37</sup> The work implies that such miscegenation results in Jewish dominance. In Europe Jewish blood was considered to be dominant, and the story demonstrates this dominance, first, by the fact that intercourse with the Jewess leads to the demise of the prince's line; second, by the inevitable association of miscegenation with the victory of the nominally atheist ideology of the Jews brought about by the need to betray Christianity; and, third, by the fact that Jewish blood, according to Mirra, is further strengthened by that of other eastern nations. Vagner's Jewess thus combines demonic qualities such as deceiving and tempting people into blasphemy with qualities that identify her and Jews as a whole as a racial threat. Its slightness notwithstanding, one can interpret 'Mirra' as presenting a more straightforward antisemitic ideology than the main work by Vagner to be discussed.

### Vagner's Problematic Hero

Before detailing the plot of *Temnyi put'* and discussing some problematic aspects of the novel such as its narrator and its ideological tendencies, I shall summarize selected contemporary reactions to the work. Even those readers who shared Vagner's goals of inciting antisemitism scorned his resort to the fantastic and incredible in *Temnyi put'* when dealing with 'facts' about Jewish anti-Russian activity that these readers considered to be better presented realistically, preferably via documentary evidence (as Krestovskii and the – yet to be published at the time – *Protocols* do). For example, a *Novoe vremia* reviewer lambasted Vagner's misuse of documentary evidence for various Jewish crimes against Russia by colouring them with theatricality.<sup>38</sup> A reviewer in the liberal journal *Russkoe bogatstvo* condemned the novel as unbelievable and antisemitic pulp fiction.<sup>39</sup> The poet and critic for the Jewish journal *Nedel'naia khronika Voskhoda*, Semen Frug, devoted four issues of his column to a summary of the plot of the novel while tearing it apart for its lack of credibility and its consequent

<sup>36</sup> 'Mirra', p. 291.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Wilson, *Ideology and Experience: Antisemitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair* (East Brunswick, NJ, 1982), p. 586.

<sup>38</sup> Referred to in Sluchainyi fel'etonist [S. G. Frug], 'Mimokhodom: "Iz dal'nikh stranstvii" (Po povodu odnogo romana)', *Nedel'naia khronika Voskhoda*, 6 (1890), pp. 156–59 (p. 157).

<sup>39</sup> L. O., 'Kot Murlyka (N. P. Vagner) kak romanist', *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 11 (1888), pp. 12–14 (p. 12).

failure even to convey its antisemitic message effectively.<sup>40</sup> Gornfel'd labelled Vagner's writing ridiculous and rejected his strain of antisemitism, as expressed both in *Temnyi put'* and his short story 'Mirra', as insane and unlikely to convince anyone not already possessing such views.<sup>41</sup> Gornfel'd is right, but the success and catastrophic influence of the *Protocols* in Russia and in Western Europe proves that there was a significant number of influential people willing to believe in conspiracies of the sort depicted in Vagner's works, which Dudakov has found to be key in the genesis of that infamous fabrication.<sup>42</sup>

*Temnyi put'* was first published as a complete two-volume work in 1890.<sup>43</sup> The first three parts of the four-part novel were originally published as *Temnoe delo* from 1881 to 1884 in tsarist Russia's foremost spiritualist journal *Rebus* (1881–1917). The events of the novel are mainly concentrated in the 1850s and early 1860s, but the narrator's last words are apparently penned in the 1880s. The narrator, Vladimir Olinskii, recalls how in 1851, as a 22-year-old university graduate, he set out to investigate the ritual murder of his mother. He connects the murder to a group of Tatar prince-brothers, the Barkhaevs, one of whom had had an affair with Olinskii's mother and had attempted to convert her to Islam. The local Tatars' power resembles that ascribed to the Jews in the novel, and is similarly bolstered by hatred of Russians. For example, Vagner implies that the Tatars are pursuing a conspiracy to establish a modern-day 'Tatar yoke', and the local authorities are terrified of the Barkhaevs' power and their important connections. Apart from their involvement in ritual murder, a further occult element in their depiction is their organization of pagan orgies, in which representatives of the local authorities also participate and at which locals are sacrificed.

Frustrated by the local authorities' fear of and infiltration by the murderers and their collaborators, Olinskii sets off for St Petersburg to petition the tsar himself. However, the trip is abandoned when he stops off by chance with some friends in a town on the way to watch a performance of a pantomime and becomes infatuated with its star, the beautiful Jewess Sara Gol'dval'd. Despite warnings about the danger to which he is exposing himself, he begins to pursue her. His obsession with her leads to a

<sup>40</sup> Sluchainyi fel'etonist [S. G. Frug], 'Mimokhodom: "Iz dal'nikh stranstvii" (Po povodu odnogo romana)', *Nedel'naia khronika Voskhoda*, 3 (1890), pp. 76–79; 4 (1890), pp. 107–11; 5 (1890), pp. 132–35; 6 (1890), pp. 156–59.

<sup>41</sup> A. G. Gornfel'd, *Knigi i liudi* (St Petersburg, 1908), p. 234. Gornfel'd also explains how Vagner, whom he loved as a writer of children's stories, gave him a 'painful blow' through the 'mad, nightmarish' antisemitism he promoted via *Temnyi put'* (*ibid.*, p. 233).

<sup>42</sup> Dudakov, *IOM*, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> N. P. Vagner, *Temnyi put'* (hereafter, *TP*), 2 vols (St Petersburg, 1890).

mild mental breakdown when he discovers that she is using sex to manipulate a powerful prince into influencing what would appear to be the government's policy towards Jews or at least towards her family. This shatters Olinskii's belief that Sara is a pure, innocent woman, but his infatuation with her continues unabated. It becomes clear that she is an agent of the worldwide Jewish conspiracy and that she wishes to draw the prince and, later, Olinskii (who is from the nobility) into it, while fleecing them of their money. Olinskii undergoes therapy (carried out by Jews), but continues throughout the novel to fall into states of unconsciousness and delirium. In the occult antisemitic context of the novel, and given the traditional association of Jews with causing insanity, it may be considered that demonic forces embodied by the Jews bring about these descents into madness.<sup>44</sup> In line with the trend in works relating to the Jewish conspiracy, *Temnyi put'* portrays the Jews in Russia as trying particularly hard to entice into their web members of the Russian nobility like Olinskii, presumably because of their potential power and influence, but also probably because of their corruptibility and lack of patriotism. This fault is embodied by the narrator, who throughout the novel is easily distracted from patriotic activities and his duty towards his family and loved ones by the lure of pleasure, especially that offered by seductive women, both Jewish and Gentile.

Among Olinskii's visitors during his convalescence is Sara, who had apparently intervened to prevent him from being taken to a mental asylum after he had gone into a rage. Sara visits him ostensibly in order to aid his convalescence, since her presence brings him great joy. Although initially rejecting his advances, Sara allows Olinskii to realize his dream of possessing her sexually after he lends her 25,000 roubles (which she never returns in full) after she claims that her family has been reduced to poverty. Sara responds to Olinskii's later marriage proposal by aggressively rejecting the possibility of ever marrying a Christian, expressing her hatred of non-Jews. Immediately after this incident, he happens to overhear a secret meeting of international Jews pursuing the world-conspiracy. Before the end of the first part of the four-part novel, Olinskii therefore can no longer be deemed naive: he knows both of the deceitfulness and ill intent of Jewish women and of the aims and scale of the Jewish conspiracy. In an unexpected twist, while recovering from a duel with the Tatar who is probably his mother's murderer, Olinskii receives a letter from Sara expressing her wish to be his wife, on the condition that he convert to Judaism.<sup>45</sup> At the same time he also

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<sup>44</sup> Laqueur, p. 56.

<sup>45</sup> *TP*, I, p. 153.

learns that since writing that letter she has died from poisoning. It later transpires that the *kahal*, led by Sara's father, had decided to kill her ostensibly for breaking Sabbath but probably actually because her involvement with Olinskii inadvertently gave him access to Jewish secrets. One is therefore led to believe that Sara's letter was a desperate attempt to secure Olinskii's protection from the *kahal*'s persecution of her.

One of the major themes of Part Two of the novel is Olinskii's brave participation in the Crimean War, which the novel presents the Jews as having started (along with the Russo-Turkish War) in order to weaken the Empire. The war and Nicholas I's death precede a period of sweeping socio-political changes and what the novel presents as moral decay in Russian society and an influx of ideologies that threaten Russian national cohesion. Vagner's Jews drive and exploit this time of turmoil to lure Russians under their control by attracting them to nihilist and socialist groups, thereby further weakening the country's moral, social and political foundations. Similar activity is taking place in other countries as part of the worldwide Jewish conspiracy. As if to emphasize the lack of ideological sincerity of the Jews and their congenital preoccupation with money, the novel has Jewish bankers lead much of the activity. Vagner thus blames Jews for the development of revolutionary movements in the 1860s, and avers that these movements serve no social group within the Russian nation, but only work against national interests. Like Krestovskii in his trilogy, Vagner in *Temnyi put'* therefore combines anti-radicalism with antisemitism.

Olinskii's attempt to battle these radical movements and his nation's and his own moral decline is a major theme of the novel. However, he never becomes a racial antisemite. After finding out about the Jewish conspiracy in the first part, he implicitly retains hope that some Jews may be good people (a hope that the end of the novel proves valid). He finds a circle devoted to ideals such as non-violence and universal brotherly love. It is non-radical both in its opposition to all violence and in its insistence on the need for society to change itself and its values in accordance with God's law, rather than waiting for or forcing external change; moreover, it explicitly blames Russian society for the ills it faces and opposes nationalism.<sup>46</sup> However, within six years the communal spirit of the circle has weakened considerably. While Olinskii does see the errors of his ways and does overcome his apathy to some extent, he cannot muster enough faith and therefore his activities cannot contribute to overcoming the dark forces working towards the ruin of Russia.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., II, 237–49.

At the end of the novel, set over thirty years after it began, Olinskii still considers himself alienated from the Russian people, not least because he has been living abroad. On the verge of suicide, he is almost convinced that Russia is heading inexorably down a ‘dark path’. There appears to be no hope of salvation from the dark forces that have taken over Russia, although Olinskii maintains a vague hope because of his memory of the good, self-sacrificing people he knew who died in the battle for their and his ideals.<sup>47</sup> They make him believe that perhaps society can be made more humane, moral and happy, but his despair remains.<sup>48</sup>

The novel is ambiguous in its relation to Jews. On the one hand, it portrays Jews as Russians’ most powerful and influential enemies, luring other enemies into war with the Russians. On the other hand, it does not single out the Jews as the cause of all Russia’s calamities. The Jews in the novel do not differ radically from the Tatars: both groups are portrayed as aliens wielding terrifying power in Russia, participating in occult practices and destroying innocent Russians (one of the leaders of the Jewish conspiracy, speaking to other Jews involved, mentions the Tatars as competitors).<sup>49</sup> Moreover, it is Tatars, not Jews, who kill Olinskii’s mother. Muslims in general are portrayed as bloodthirsty fanatics, and the Circassians manifest these qualities to the utmost degree; there is no indication of Jewish influence in their fighting with the Russians, and they engage in anti-Christian activity such as breaking church icons and sprinkling them with blood. The ethnic and religious ‘Other’ is therefore consistently shown as evil and anti-Christian – yet the novel does portray at least one exception of outstanding goodness among Jews, but not among Tatars or Circassians.

Often the novel portrays Russians as participating in subversive activity without implying Jewish involvement: it shows that Russians, too, can undermine their state and society without prodding from Jews. Furthermore, by portraying a weak hero who, for example, continues to involve himself with Jewish women who are obviously Jewish agents despite his knowledge of and declared battle against the conspiracy, Vagner suggests that Russian weakness is a major contributing factor in the Russian nation’s downfall. On the one hand, most of Vagner’s Jews, male and female, are associated with the demonic through features such as their participation in occult rituals, their campaign against Christianity and a power to deceive, manipulate and tempt that seems explicable only by the possession of unnatural powers allied to Satan. On the other hand, aspects of the novel show that such demonism cannot be unredeemable and

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 465.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 465.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 123.

cannot pervade the whole race. Wagner is therefore ultimately ambivalent with regard to his portrayal of Jews vis-à-vis Russians, and the novel's uncertain antisemitism is no more prominent than its anti-radicalism, criticism of Russians (especially those from the nobility) and general overwhelming pessimism. Precisely how much the Jews are to blame for the 'dark forces' that pervade Russia remains unclear at the end of the novel.

The notion of Jews as enemies of Gentiles also features in Wagner's non-fictional writings. In an 1882 article in memory of Charles Darwin he presents Jews as engaged in a 'battle for existence' with other nations, whom they exploit. By applying Darwinian theory, Wagner implies that Jews are a distinct species; the article thus has more in common with racist theory than with myths proclaiming Jews to be demons. According to the article, Jews are guaranteed victory because of their development of a superior organism and personal qualities in the course of evolution as a result of persecution. They may therefore constitute a superior species:

Она [победа] достанется той бродящей, кочующей нации, не имеющей отечества, которой цепкая, тягучая живучесть вырабатывалась вековым гнетом и гонениями. Это самые крепкие и опытные борцы в жизни, в борьбе за существование. [...] Вот те борцы, на которых блистательно оправдывается принцип Дарвина. В течение многих веков под влиянием гонений вырабатывается в этой нации подбор производителей, более ловких, находчивых, которые умеют скрываться вовремя, увернуться или откупиться от преследований. Потомство этих производителей, целый длинный ряд поколений существовал при тех же условиях борьбы, которая вошла в плоть и кровь нации, сделалась потребностью организма, и теперь только грубая физическая сила может остановить ее дальнейшие стремления в эксплуатации других народностей.<sup>50</sup>

Vagner's solution here echoes the genocidal solution for which Kryzhanovskaia's novel propagandizes, but no such solution is suggested in Vagner's novel. One might presume that this is because Vagner's hero is too weak and lacking in insight to see the true solution to the Jewish threat: using physical force against them. Indeed, one could read the novel against the narrator's position of advocating non-violence, since, while there is no evidence that violence is destined to rid Russia of the Jewish threat, the novel does at least present Olinskii's participation in the Crimean War (for which he is awarded a

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<sup>50</sup> N. Vagner, 'Darvin i XX stoteletie', *Novoe vremia*, 16 April 1882, p. 1.

medal) as more heroic than his attempts to promote peace. Moreover, violence is shown as an effective measure against some devilish, savage fanatics, the Circassians.<sup>51</sup> However, a response to criticism of *Temnyi put'* that Vagner published eight years after the Darwin article does not seize on the opportunity provided by a war that amounted to ethnic cleansing to promote a similar measure against the Jews. Rather than rejecting his hero's pacifistic attempt at a solution to the ills plaguing Russian society, Vagner endorses it: 'Как реакция нашей розни и себялюбия, было бы весьма желательно образование тех человечных кружков взаимной самопомощи, о которых так неудачно и неумело хлопотал слабохарактерный герой моего романа.'<sup>52</sup> It is clear that Vagner intended the novel to have an ideological message and that his hero's views are close to his own, at least towards the end of the novel. The problem that Vagner identifies in his hero is not his capacity to see what Russian society needs or what Jews are doing to the society, but his weakness. Moreover, Vagner describes Olinskii as an 'unexceptional Russian person'. He is therefore not an example of an exceptionally weak Russian, but rather of a typical Russian, whom Vagner characterizes as follows: 'Он храбр, пока озлоблен; когда же утихаает его злоба, то с ней улетает и его храбрость.'<sup>53</sup> Although Olinskii does show occasional bravery, Vagner rejects his achievements as 'unexceptional'. Vagner's response to criticism of the novel thus suggests that his views on Jews had either changed since the Darwin article or were not as definite as that article had suggested. He explains that the tendentiousness of the novel is deliberate and unambiguous and that his political sympathies are clear. Reacting to accusations that the novel was antisemitic, he concedes that, while it does have antisemitic tendencies, his view on the question is not one-sided,<sup>54</sup> as exemplified by the fact that one of his Jews, Liia (who will be discussed later in the chapter), both constituted an ideal person and caused national enmity to fall silent through her death.<sup>55</sup>

Whatever Vagner's views on Jews and on the problems facing Russia might have been, the novel is confused in a manner that does not suggest a sophisticated attempt to examine a variety of viewpoints on and factors in the problems with which it engages, but rather uncertainty in its position on these problems. Moreover, as Dudakov observes, the work lacks a coherent story line, consisting of chapters that at some points

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<sup>51</sup> *TP*, I, pp. 231–32.

<sup>52</sup> Kot-Murlyka [N. P. Vagner], 'Pis'mo v redaktsiu', *Novoe vremia*, 17 February 1890, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

in the novel are only loosely connected.<sup>56</sup> One of the problematic aspects of the novel is the difficulty of determining to what degree the defeat of Russia is inevitable or even predetermined by superhuman forces and to what degree it could be averted if Russians as a whole became stronger. In line with the novel's occult theme, Vagner has a prophetess, Serafima L'vovna, predict that Russia will have to undergo a bloody, martyrs' trial, with an unknown resolution, and that the future belongs to the Jews.<sup>57</sup> Presumably, for a spiritualist like Vagner such a prediction, supported by powers of clairvoyance, would constitute solid evidence, and indeed Olinskii claims that he owes her a lot for her insights.<sup>58</sup> However, another prophetess, the angelic Lena who becomes Olinskii's fiancée but breaks off the engagement after he betrays her with Serafima, is far more certain in her pessimism. The fact that what she predicts turns out to be true lends all her words credence. Rather than predicting a battle with an uncertain outcome like Serafima, she tells Olinskii that there is no point in fighting the dark forces: 'Это сверх человеческих сил...'<sup>59</sup> One can infer that the Russians are facing forces beyond the realm of the human. Lena thus affirms the novel's presentation of demonic forces but does not connect them to the Jews. She proceeds to give a prediction of Russia's future that echoes the events of the Book of Revelation: 'Нет спасения! [...] Земное должно совершиться... Страшное "темное дело", как ты его называешь, погубит все... Останутся только немногие, избранные... и все погибнет в огне очищения...'<sup>60</sup> The promotion of prophecy as a superior means to insight into the Jews' true plans would appear to raise the battle between Jews and Russians to an apocalyptic level, as the *Protocols* and Kryzhanovskaia's novel do. Yet the precise role of Jews in this catastrophe is uncertain. In a letter confirming and elaborating on her prophecy, Lena does not mention Jews but only Russian national characteristics as the reason for Russia's doom: 'Нас победит зло. Нас победит мертвенная, богоненавистная неподвижность и эгоизм... Еще раз повторяю: дай Бог, чтобы мое пророчество не оправдалось!'<sup>61</sup> Although Jews represent dark forces, they are not the only ones operating in Russian society and leading it inevitably to a precipice. Inertness and egoism are general human qualities whose presence in Russians and in Russia can hardly be wholly attributed to the Jews.

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<sup>56</sup> Dudakov, *IOM*, p. 245.

<sup>57</sup> *TP*, I, p. 335.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 339.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 206.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 206.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 217.

Furthermore, the novel is pervaded by a general pessimism that is also not directly attributed to the Jews. The last image in the novel is of a cart that is conveying some people to a place of resettlement moving towards a dark, faraway place.<sup>62</sup> Olinskii compares the cart with Russia, which he perceives as moving into a dark, unknown future; the cart also becomes a metaphor for Olinskii's personal sense of alienation from his native land and uncertainty as to whether he deserves to call himself Russian.<sup>63</sup> On the one hand, the novel identifies Jews and 'village community exploiters' (*miroedy*) – a group that presumably includes kulaks – as pushing Russia towards a future whose exact nature is known only to them, since it is they who are pushing the cart. However, Olinskii believes that the reason why Russia (and every country) is moving into a terrible future is because it is 'obeying some kind of law'.<sup>64</sup> Given the views Vagner expressed in the Darwin article, one might expect this 'law' to relate to Jews' victory in the struggle for existence but the novel never engages in such an explicitly biological view of the matter, and it would fit ill with the vaguer presentation of 'dark forces' that is prominent. The novel is never able successfully to marry its biological/racial and spiritual elements, an area in which 'Mirra' had some success. Moreover, towards the end of the novel Olinskii considers various possible laws that are too general to relate exclusively to Jews' superiority over other nations. For example, he wonders whether it might be impossible for human beings to influence history because, rather than humankind making history, history makes humankind. He also wonders whether the goal of his former circle of uniting humankind is pointless after speaking to a man who claims that 'love and hate are biological and one cannot cultivate them' and that spite is the foundation of humankind.<sup>65</sup> At this point in the novel one wonders whether Jews merely embody the most egoistic, dark qualities common to all humanity and present in usually lesser degrees in non-Jews; such a reading implies that they do not necessarily constitute a race or entity entirely separate from humanity, an interpretation supported at the end of the novel by the appearance of two Jews characterized by a capacity for love, in one case love for a Gentile (Olinskii). Focusing on his portrayal of the Jewess, this chapter will show that Vagner, despite apparently attempting to portray Jews as demonic, does not give a consistent, blanket portrayal and therefore does not create an overall impression of Jews as the embodiment of the Antichrist and as to blame for all

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., II, p. 486.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., II, p. 486.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., II, p. 486.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., II, pp. 432–37.

Russia's ills in the way that Kryzhanovskaia and other representatives of the far right were inclined to do.

### Vagner's Demonic Jewess: Seduction as Sedition

Feminist critics assert that the notion of woman as demon constitutes one half of the dichotomy according to which women have been depicted in European literature. In Joe Andrew's formulation, 'Woman is both (sometimes simultaneously) angel and demon'.<sup>66</sup> This perception of women results from men's view of female sexuality as disruptive and destructive: to the male mind, possession of a demonstrative sexuality renders a woman out of male control and demonic.<sup>67</sup>

Vagner draws on the associations of Jewish female sexuality with corruption, ruin and death.<sup>68</sup> He portrays his Jewess's sexuality not only as out of male control, but also as a force that leads to the loss of male sanity and that is directly in the service of the Jews' devilish plans: throughout the novel the *kahal*, which organizes the pantomime, uses Jewish women to entice men through sex into supporting Jewry or joining Jewish organizations and thereby contributing to the death of Russian and Christian civilization. Olinskii foresees the effect that the Jewess Sara will have on him when he describes her beauty as 'невиданная, поражающая, такая, от которой легко сойти с ума и застрелиться'.<sup>69</sup> While Kuprin's Etlia provokes anxiety and Chekhov's Susanna infects her lovers with a sexual addiction from which the stronger can recover, Vagner's Jewess causes outright madness. She also has a disruptive and destructive influence on Russian society, presaged when she appears on stage in the pantomime and sends the audience into a frenzy during the encore, necessitating the intervention of the police.<sup>70</sup> The novel confirms Olinskii's initial impression and the socio-cultural associations of female Jewish beauty and provides evidence for Mock's assertion (which draws on Sartre) that in the nineteenth century the beauty of the Jewess 'represented a threat that needed to be controlled'.<sup>71</sup>

Vagner's Jewess has the power not only of beauty but also of art at her disposal. The profession of acting associates her with the artificial and the deceptive. The stage, with its connotations of prostitution, allows her seemingly to offer her body to the audience, as Chekhov's Susanna does to men, but, unlike Susanna, actually refuse them its pleasures. Sara's revealing of her beauty is ostentatious: 'Она шла медленно, гордо, вся закутанная в ее легкий покров. Она подошла к рампе, постояла и вдруг

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<sup>66</sup> Andrew, *Women in Russian Literature*, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>68</sup> Wilson, p. 547.

<sup>69</sup> *TP*, I, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 45

<sup>71</sup> Mock, p. 9.

быстрым движением откинула легкий покров с лица.<sup>72</sup> The veil is associated with virginity and chastity, but Sara shows it to be only an illusion.

Vagner leaves the reader in no doubt that Sara is not a victim of the male leer, she encourages and exploits male sexual attention. However, so much does Sara's beauty deceive the young, naive narrator that at first, at the same time as seeing her as a 'capturer of souls', he finds in her qualities he had associated with his mother, such as sexual innocence, and sees her, like his mother, as an unwilling victim of dark machinations rather than their agent: 'А может быть, мне удастся вырвать ее из когтей этой бесчестной интриги. О! Она еще не пала! Она, наверно, чиста, невинна. Милый, пылкий, восторженный ребенок! Я буду, да я должен быть твоим охранителем.'<sup>73</sup> In his grief, confusion and youth, Olinskii mistakes sexual desire for love and a wish to protect a figure whom he wrongly identifies with his mother, whom he had been unable to protect. Olinskii's perception of Sara as 'pure' is a reversal of her true nature as both '*nechistaia*', in the sense of sexually depraved, and an evil, 'unclean' spirit – '*nechistaia sila*'. Like Sarah Bernhardt, on whom her character is partly based, her roles on and off the stage blur to make her real-life 'performance' confusing, deceptive and indecipherable, facilitating the narrator's mistaken perception of her actual character.<sup>74</sup>

To conceive her in the dichotomy of feminist criticism and in relation to Russian literature: she is not a beautiful, self-sacrificing angel and potential victim of rape, seduction or baseless sexual slander as in the case of Karamzin's Liza or Turgenev's Susanna of '*Neschastnaia*', but a sexually destructive, narcissistic demon. Vagner's Jewess reverses the paradigm identified by Andrew of seduction – betrayal – death as applicable to Karamzin's Liza and countless other similar types in European literature, so that it applies not to the woman, but to the man (while the narrator does not actually die, he comes close to it). Earlier, Vagner had used the paradigm to present Olinskii's mother as an example of an ideal woman, and now employs its inverse to condemn his Jewess. He also inverts the classic myth of the *belle juive*, according to which the Jewess attracts Gentiles but becomes sexually obtainable only through her moral and spiritual improvement (conversion to Christianity): Sara becomes obtainable only

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<sup>72</sup> *TP*, I, p. 44.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 54.

<sup>74</sup> Carol Ockman, 'When is a Jewish Star Just a Star? Interpreting Images of Sarah Bernhardt', in *The Jew in the Text*, ed. by Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (London, 1995), pp. 121–39 (p. 121).

through the moral and spiritual ruin of the Gentile, thus revealing the indomitability of Jewishness in all its capacity to corrupt and destroy.

Sara's and other Jewesses' connection with the occult theme of the novel is evident in the circumstances in which Olinskii usually comes across them – apparently chance meetings that lead him deeper and deeper into the Jews' intrigue. In the overall occultist atmosphere that pervades the novel, chance meetings may acquire an occult association. The circumstances and consequences of Olinskii's meeting with the demonic Jewess for the first time are typical of the occult antisemitic novel, in many of which the 'future victim's apparently chance acquaintance with a villain from the band of Jewish satanists serves to set the plot in motion'.<sup>75</sup> Olinksii's sighting of Sara appears to precipitate the horrendous events that beset him and other Russians in the novel. In context, the reader may be led to assume that dark forces are at work forcing Olinskii to meet Sara and enslaving him in his passion for her. She therefore appears far more sinister than, for example, Chekhov's Susanna, whose behaviour was ultimately predictable and motives clear, and whose apparent power over men was explained in the story as the result of human urges shared by men, women, Jews and Russians alike.

Vagner presents Sara as possessing overt demonic features in certain situations. When Olinskii, torn between love for and anger at Sara after he has realized her deception of him, tells her that he will forgive her and implores her to be his wife, Sara's reaction sets the tone for the depiction of Jews in the rest of the novel:

– Слушай ты, – заговорила она строгим голосом, слушай ты, безумный мальчик (да, она именно так и сказала: *vahnsinnige Knabe*). Я не могу: пойми ты, я не могу быть женой христианина... Я ненавижу, презираю весь ваш проклятый род деспотов, гонителей бедного племени великого Иеговы. Еслиб можно было обмануть всех вас, презренных, всех раззорить [sic], утопить... сжечь на медленном огне, я... я... и она близко, близко придвинула ко мне свое лицо, искаженное злобой, – я, Сара, сделала бы это собственными руками.

И она глухо и дико захочотала и поднесла к моему лицу стиснутые кулаки.

– Сара! – вскричал я невольно. Ведь мы тоже люди! Дети единого Бога!

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<sup>75</sup> Zolotonosov, p. 36.

Она удивленно посмотрела на меня и презрительно проговорила сквозь зубы:

– Вы не люди! Вы дети Вельзевула и Астарта!

Затем, бросив на меня дикий, злобный взгляд, она быстро, опрометью отвернулась и медленно пошла опять к дрерце.<sup>76</sup>

The passage, in the context of the qualities that Sara has already exhibited such as a sexuality of unnatural power and her deceitfulness, contributes to the depiction of her as demonic. With regard to her personal characteristics, there is her witch-like laughter, her anger-contorted face, and her clenched fists. Although her demonic nature is primary, another important feature is her ‘wildness’: her devilishness lends her animality, reinforcing her distance from humanity. Her conviction of Jewish racial superiority and hatred for all non-Jews explain her demonic nature. Her desire to deceive (attributed both to the devil and to Jews, and more explicitly associated with the Antichrist in ‘Mirra’) and her desire to murder Gentiles by burning also attest to her relation to the devil. Her repetition of the cliché of Jewish suffering appears in the context to constitute an excuse for Jewish persecution of Gentiles. The passage even robs Sara of her femininity: her face is contorted and she holds her fists up to Olinskii’s face like a man. Her attractiveness is shown to be a deceitful mask for her true ugly, devilish nature.

The incident leads directly to Olinskii’s discovery of the full extent of the worldwide Jewish conspiracy. He follows Sara into the site of the pantomime and stumbles upon a secret Sabbath meeting that has distinct occult elements and which he observes through cracks in the wall of an adjacent storeroom.<sup>77</sup> Twenty people dressed in shrouds stand holding candles in a room that turns out to have a multitude of hidden doors and passages. Among those gathered are men who ostensibly helped Olinskii recover from his breakdown, including the doctor, confirming both the pervasiveness and deceptiveness of Jews. A rabbi, who turns out to be Sara’s father, gives a speech, most of the key ideas of which are the same as those of rabbi Ionafan’s speech in Krestovskii’s trilogy and those proclaimed in the *Protocols*: the *kahal* as a secret worldwide society steering Jewish deeds and influencing world politics in Jews’ favour; the conception of the ‘Promised Land’ to which Jews aspire as involving the enslavement and perhaps destruction of Gentiles; the use of money, including the

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<sup>76</sup> *TP*, I, pp. 117–18.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 118.

possession of major international financial firms, as a weapon against Gentiles' physical and political might to eventually enslave them; control of the press; the provoking of wars between European nations (in this case the Crimean War); and the desire to destroy Gentiles, who are termed the 'enemies of the nation'.<sup>78</sup> When the rabbi pronounces the phrase 'Смерть врагам!', the listeners become 'possessed by fury' ('бесноватыми') and their faces are contorted with malice.<sup>79</sup> The root 'бес-' and the description of them indicate the Jews' demonic nature and reinforce their affinity with Sara, who has just been described in a similar manner.

Olinskii shows his capacity to respond to the Jews' attempts to destroy his nation as one might expect him to – with anger and violence. Enraged by the rabbi's speech, he shoots one of the pistols he happens to have with him (in preparation for the duel with Barkhaev) through the wall behind which he is hiding.<sup>80</sup> Despite the fact that the Jews are leaders of a powerful international organization, they do not fight back, but scream for help, reinforcing stereotypes about Jewish male hysteria.<sup>81</sup> Sara has the composure and courage they lack: she comes at Olinskii with a knife. The full extent of Sara's demonism is revealed: her sexual allure is now directly associated with death, not least because Olinskii still finds her attractive despite the fact that, again, her face is 'contorted with malice'.<sup>82</sup> Her power to tempt persists even when her demonic nature has been revealed. She is portrayed as a leader and as more masculine than the male Jews: while she confronts Olinskii, all the male Jews fall to the ground or run away.<sup>83</sup> While she shows fearlessness and masculine aggressiveness, they show cowardice and fear of direct physical confrontation, only shooting at Olinskii from a safe distance. She even continues to walk towards Olinskii when he threatens to shoot her, throwing herself at him and engaging in a short fight. While male Jews possess neither the capacity to lure Russian men into madness and enslavement through sexual attraction nor the capacity to engage in physical confrontation, Vagner's Jewess possesses both these powerful weapons. She combines the powerful, destructive elements of both the female and male natures.

Olinskii wins the fight with Sara, taking her knife and grabbing her arms. However, he immediately compromises with her. In the circumstances, one can accept as an act of survival his promise to say nothing about what he has learnt about Jews'

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., I, pp. 121–28.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., I, p. 122.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., I, p. 128,

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., I, p. 128.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., I, p. 129.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., I, p. 129.

plans so long as she ensures that he leaves without harm. The second condition that he imposes on her, however, suggests that his money is more important than the fate of his nation: he tells her that tomorrow she must give him 20,000 of the money she owes him, allowing her to keep the remaining 5,000 as a gift. As she shows him out through a secret door, he exhibits even greater weakness: he moves to hug and kiss her, but she moves away.<sup>84</sup> All it takes for Olinskii to overcome his anger at Sara is confirmation of his physical superiority over her: once he has incapacitated her, her murderous intent means nothing to him and she can win him back into her clutches effortlessly through her sexual allure. Vagner's Jewess thus exhibits the capacity to calm the Russian male's anger at Jews' actions against his nation, although the novel shows that she would be incapable of doing so were the Russian to possess sufficient national and personal pride. The following day, Olinskii rebukes himself: 'что же ты не донесешь? Ведь ты русский! Против твоей отчизны России вооружается жидовский кагал, устраивает махинации, тайное общество... И ты, ты русский, продал твое молчание за женскую красоту и за 20,000 рублей. Стыд и срам тебе, русскому дворянину!',<sup>85</sup> He soothes his conscience by telling himself that the police are bribed into not investigating such matters; that involving oneself in political matters, especially Jewish ones, is dangerous; and that any Russian of his class would also stay silent – excuses that later in his life he views with self-hatred.<sup>86</sup>

Through Sara, Vagner presents the possibility that, contrary to traditional socio-cultural conceptions, Jewish women in certain respects constitute a more powerful threat to Russians than male Jews, possessing qualities essential to the successful pursuit of the Jewish conspiracy that are lacking in male Jews. Although Sara is feminine in appearance and in her passionateness, she and most other Jewish women in the novel are presented as masculine, in line with Mock's assertion that '*La belle juive* is both hyperfeminine and perversely masculine, usually represented as a *femme fatale* who lures men to their deaths'.<sup>87</sup> Rather than embodying motherhood, Sara directly opposes it: instead of using sexual intercourse as a means of expressing love and producing children, she exploits it in order to deceive, steal, enslave and destroy. She also distracts Olinskii from his search for justice for his mother and ruinously replaces his mother as the object of his love.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., I, p. 131.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., I, pp. 133–34.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., I, p. 134.

<sup>87</sup> Mock, p. 19.

Sara's true phallic nature is revealed by her aggression, for example, her wielding a dagger (which has phallic connotations), and her control over her sexuality: rather than being sold by men as is expected of a prostitute in her feminine passivity, she sells herself; rather than submitting sexually to men as women do according to the conventions of patriarchy, men submit to her despite their earnest wishes not to, as if she were raping them. This impression is upheld by the interchangeability – with regard to furthering Sara's own and her nation's goals – of her forceful sexuality and use of sheer violence. After their encounter at knife- and gunpoint, Olinskii dreams of Sara in another masculine role as a vampire (associated with the masculine through Dracula and the motif of penetration) who wants to suck out his soul.<sup>88</sup> All this confirms Pellegrini's assertion that 'The hyperbolic femininity of the *belle juive* conceals her "real" nature: a perverse masculinity.'<sup>89</sup> It also associates the Jewess with the belief that Jews were obsessed with blood, for example, that they used it for various ritual purposes.<sup>90</sup> Vagner's Jewess alone can stand for all the negative qualities that traditionally in Russian literature were attributed largely to male Jews, such as greed and exploitativeness. Yet, because of her powerful sexual allure and capacity for aggression (both absent in the traditional male Jew), she can be seen as twice as powerful and harmful as the male Jew. Consequently, even towards the end of the novel, the mere recollection of Sara can evoke in Olinskii all his 'antipathy to her tribe'.<sup>91</sup> However, it should be noted that the novel does not present Sara as an actual killer, a role fulfilled by male Jews and, moreover, against her. Consequently, although the text depicts the demonic Jewess as apparently more powerful than – and therefore more of a threat than – male Jews, it is male Jews who are portrayed as ultimately the greatest villains, and the Jewess is at least as much their victim as their agent.

The diametric opposite of Vagner's masculine Jewess are the various angelic, self-sacrificing Russian women in the novel. Olinskii looks up to his mother as a female model, since he describes her as a martyr for dying for her refusal to succumb to the Tatar's sexual advances and attempts to convert her to Islam. Another such model is

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<sup>88</sup> *TP*, I, p. 131. For an early twentieth-century Russian depiction of the Jewess as vampire, see Sologub's 'Krasnogubaia gost'ia' (1909) in F. Sologub, *Zaklinatel'nitsa zmei* (Moscow, 1997), pp. 597–610.

<sup>89</sup> Ann Pellegrini, *Performance Anxieties: Staging Psychoanalysis, Staging Race* (New York, 1997), p. 70.

<sup>90</sup> A classic text containing such allegations is Rozanov's *Oboniatel'noe i osiazatel'noe otnoshenie evreev k krovi* (1914). See also Harriet Murav, 'The Beilis Ritual Murder Trial and the Culture of Apocalypse', *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, 12 (2000), 243–63, and Klier, *IRJQ*, pp. 418–36.

<sup>91</sup> *TP*, II, p. 393.

Lena, his eighteen-year-old cousin three times removed whom he had saved from drowning as a child – a detail presumably intended to give Olinskii some right to claim himself as a worthy suitor for her. Of the various embodiments of Russian female perfection in the novel, Lena is most explicitly contrasted with the opposing type, the sexually loose, scheming, murderous demonic Jewess. Lena is free of Sara's dangerous sexual attraction not only because she does not use her femininity to lure men, but also because she is not physically beautiful.<sup>92</sup> While Sara has physical beauty, Lena has spiritual beauty. Olinskii meets her for the first time since childhood the day after the Sabbath incident, and falls in love with her almost immediately. Lena highlights the distinction between herself and Sara by showing her disgust when Olinskii tells her that he had fallen in love with a Jewish pantomime actress.<sup>93</sup> This angel thus condones the novel's antisemitism. While Sara gives herself to anyone for money or power, Lena refrains from even allowing Olinskii to kiss her: despite the fact that she is obviously in love with him, she is appalled by the ease with which Olinskii fell in love with the Jewess just because she is beautiful.<sup>94</sup> Olinskii's attraction to Sara, one is reminded, is merely lust, while his love for Lena is genuine, and reveals Lena's moral superiority to him. Lena's qualities are a reproach to both Olinskii and Sara. This concords with a trend in Russian literature whereby 'The inadequacies and weaknesses of some male protagonists find their complementary awesome strengths in the young heroines of Russia'.<sup>95</sup>

Lena represents the self-possession that Olinskii lacks and which Sara drains further from him, Sara herself combining self-possession (in her cunningness) with lack of restraint (in her hysteria). The novel explicitly demonstrates that Olinskii's love of the chastity embodied by Lena cannot compete with his weakness for debauchery. Full of idealistic thoughts about family happiness with Lena and so besotted with her that he feels pure and chaste and no longer possesses even a trace of his love for Sara, Olinskii lets the Jewess into his house in order to receive the money she owes him – only to fall victim to the 'intoxicating fragrance' emanating from her body.<sup>96</sup>

In the context of the time, a woman's behaviour and personal values tended to be viewed as a reflection of her attitude towards the social and political order, with

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., I, p. 141.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., I, p. 142.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., I, p. 143.

<sup>95</sup> Heldt, p. 12.

<sup>96</sup> *TP*, I, p. 146.

unconventional behaviour viewed as an attack on the system.<sup>97</sup> Through his demonic Jewesses Vagner associates free, demonstrative sexuality and women's emancipation with demonic forces. A virtual double of Sara for whom Olinskii falls in the final part of the novel, Gesia Bergenblat, explicitly supports the same ideas of free sexual relations advocated by nihilists and other radicals, and rejects what the novel presents as the opposing force of love as an illusion blinding humankind to the truth of reason and science.<sup>98</sup> Her mission, to which her banker father has appointed her, is to lure Russians into the socialist circles that the Jews have created. Like the Jews, nihilism in *Temnyi put'* seduces with promises of sensual pleasure, although the ideology passes it off as a form of freedom, and hence it is termed 'free love'. Just as Olinskii mistook sexual desire for love, so innocent victims of nihilism mistake their sexual activity for an assertion of freedom. When Russian nihilists practise 'free love' in an attempt to do away with old prejudices and values and create a new world, they are actually destroying the moral foundation of their society, and therefore directly serving the Jews. This is echoed in Olinksii's becoming infatuated with Sara and thereby losing his commitment both to his mother and to his nation.

As Wilson establishes in the case of nineteenth-century France, 'fear and hatred of Jews [is] a way of expressing fear and hatred of sexuality'.<sup>99</sup> Through the seductive, demonic Jewess, Vagner easily marries fear of sexuality with antisemitism and antinihilism by invoking the most common stereotypes about women, Jews and nihilists. Uninhibited sexuality is simultaneously a corollary and a driver of the general low morals that pervade Russian society. Its opposite, sexual restraint and a capacity for love that is not primarily based on sexual feelings, is associated with the capacity to resist the temptations in Russia that weaken the Russian nation, especially the Jews and the political ideologies and lifestyles they support such as nihilism. Lena and some other Russian women in the novel thus represent the 'triumph of morality and sublimation over the temptations of the flesh' offered by Sara – an aim identified by Berdiaev as prevalent in Russian culture.<sup>100</sup> Even in the usually masculine sphere of war, women inspire self-sacrifice and Christian faith in Olinskii by serving as sisters of mercy, and Lena dies serving in this capacity during the Polish Uprising. The fact that those women such as Lena who are able to oppose the immoral trends in Russian

<sup>97</sup> Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Evanston, IL, 1983), p. 62.

<sup>98</sup> *TP*, II, p. 295.

<sup>99</sup> Wilson, p. 584.

<sup>100</sup> Costlow, Sandler and Vowles, 'Introduction', p. 10.

society die in the novel, while most Russians – especially men, but also many women – fall into debauchery, indifference or nihilism, testifies to the victory of the dark forces in Russia.

While it is the Russian male protagonist's weaknesses that the Jews tend to exploit, in the case of Russian women it is their strengths that the Jews tend to feed on. Even good Russian women in the novel renounce their families and nationality, falling into moral and physical ruin not because of an innate immorality, but because they have fallen for the Jews' nihilist ideology and believe that it represents the path to justice. One such woman, Zheni, exhibits all the qualities of the self-sacrificing Russian heroine, committing herself to her ideals to such an extent that she refuses to accept money from her noble family despite her impoverishment, a huge contrast with the Jewish nihilists' engagement in robbery. Zheni's involvement at the behest of Jews in the Petersburg fires brings her close to death.

However, the novel does not represent the demonism it associates with sexuality as exclusively Jewish. The reason why Olinskii's relationship with Lena fails is not because of a Jewess but because Olinskii, having become engaged to Lena, seduces the angelic prophetess Serafima. One can no longer see Olinskii as a victim of demonic Jewesses: like them, he becomes a destroyer of the innocent. Consequently, his persistent falling for Jewish women even when he is aware of their danger and their involvement in the Jewish conspiracy cannot be attributed solely to their great sexual power: one has to accept that Olinskii's (Russian male) weakness plays a role, too – even with the power of the devil behind it, Jewish female sexuality is not that strong. Vagner is more successful at using his demonic Jewesses to reveal those qualities in Russians that are leading to their national downfall than to embody absolute evil. The demonic Jewesses do constitute the diametrical opposite of ideal Russians and especially of ideal Russian women, but most Russians in the work exhibit too many of the negative qualities that the novel identifies in humankind to constitute a nation that forms a complete contrast to the demonic Jewish women, or the Jewish nation as a whole.

Moreover, there are not only Jewish but also Russian *femmes fatales* in the novel, one of whom, Princess Variatinskaia, is more directly murderous than Sara. Since the death of her husband, she has espoused a cynical view of life and love and developed a bloodthirsty joy in seeing the suffering and murder of fellow human-beings. She both drives men to suicide and murders them directly, putting on a performance of exaggerated grief upon their deaths, before descending into a chilling

cackling. Olinskii describes her as like a vampire,<sup>101</sup> and, like others, is tempted to consider her a witch.<sup>102</sup> Although he never loses his initial fear, Olinskii becomes infatuated with her when he meets her while serving in the Crimean War in Sevastopol, where she lives among Russian soldiers. He feels sorry for her as someone sad and psychologically and physically sick; having found in her a child-like humility, he even manages to make her love him. However, when she attacks him physically, he loses any warm feelings he once had for her. Her awe-inspiring, super-masculine bravery and claim to be superior to men suggest that Vagner is again trying to associate female power with a demonic nature.<sup>103</sup> Again, female power is portrayed as disruptive: here, it lures men to their deaths and is directly detrimental to the war effort. On the other hand, unlike Sara, Variatinskaia does not represent a national enemy and does not deliberately thwart the Russians' national mission. While she appears to hate humankind just like the Jews, her attitude is revealed to be the consequence of a traumatic event: before her husband's death she had apparently been an angel.<sup>104</sup> Her cruelty is thus the result of hurt femininity and reinforces the message that the masculine side to her nature is both unwelcome and unnatural. Woman can be a dangerous force, but such a degree of danger is unnatural in a Russian woman (the result of external circumstances), whereas it is an inherent characteristic of most Jewish women. Also significantly, the sexual element that was so central to Olinskii's relationship with Sara is virtually absent in his relationship with Variatinskaia, which involves no sexual contact; any sexual desire Olinskii feels for Variatinskaia is overcome by his fear of her and, later, by his sympathy for her plight. The Jewish *femme fatale* operates principally on the levels of physicality and wild passion, while the Russian *femme fatale* operates at a deeper, psychological level, engaging with emotions that she shares with the protagonist. There is no trace of acquisitiveness in her, and Olinskii towards the end of the novel even begins to relate to her detestation of humankind.<sup>105</sup> While Sara represents a truly demonic force, Variatinskaia is a person with whom one can sympathize. All the same, Variatinskaia does demonstrate that destructive femininity is not the preserve of the Jews.

One can conclude from this analysis of a selection of Vagner's many female characters that the ability of women to enrapture, enslave and destroy, or to foster moral

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<sup>101</sup> *TP*, II, p. 53.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 59.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 102

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 85

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 446.

values and provide salvation, uncovers the narrator's fear and awe of women. Overall, women's psychological strength and will-power in the novel tend to exceed men's, and they wield greater power over people within personal relationships. This may well be the reason why Vagner sees it fit to have female characters bear the ideals and ideologies, and possess the capacity to act on them, of national groups such as the Jews and the Russians.

### **Vagner's Angelic Jewess: An Unexceptional Exception**

It remains to be examined how Vagner also goes against his general demonization of Jewish women, and to a lesser extent Jewish men, by selectively humanizing them. Even Sara appears human relative to her father, who, by having his own daughter murdered, manifests a level of inhumanity that makes her actions and intentions seem tame by comparison. Moreover, when she approached Olinskii when he was caught spying on the Sabbath meeting, the image of her shaking showed an unfeigned human vulnerability not seen in her or other Jews before. One's impression is that, while Sara's destructive power can be stopped like that of any human by murder, the threat of her father and his secret society may be truly invulnerable to human, earthly intervention. While demonic, Sara reveals herself to be closer to a human being than most of the other Jews. There is even an implication that she is closer to Russians and Christians: the manner in which she is murdered could be taken to suggest that she has transferred her allegiance to the Christians, given the tradition of accusing Jews of poisoning Christians and other enemies, and given that the trope of the Jewish father poisoning his daughter is present in a classic work of literature concerning the figure of the Jewess, *The Jew of Malta*. Moreover, even if she does so involuntarily, she gives Olinskii access to Jewish secrets, without knowledge of which he would have had no chance of waging war against the Jews. Furthermore, Vagner makes Sara less of a threat than other Jews by killing her off relatively early in the novel and portrays her as going against the will of her father and of Jews in general, as in the typical father-daughter plot, even if this is accidental.

Towards the end of the novel, Olinskii meets another Jewess, Lilia Gaber, whom he describes as the most beautiful woman he has ever seen.<sup>106</sup> Despite her beauty, she is in other ways the diametrical opposite of the other Jewesses in the novel, neither coveting money nor deliberately enticing men. Although initially Lilia tries to convince Olinskii to enter her uncle Bergenblat's circle, later, feeling guilt exacerbated by her

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., II. p. 321.

growing love for Olinskii and her opposition to the Jews' goals, she stops doing so and tells Olinskii of the circle's plans and her appointed role.<sup>107</sup> She reveals that she shares Olinskii's aims of uniting humanity through love and truth.<sup>108</sup> However, an unexpected note from Liia telling Olinskii that they must stop seeing each other (presumably because of the disapproval of her father, a member of the Jewish circle) prevents any possibility of love or of cooperation in socio-political activity. The note draws on the clichés of the ill-fated *belle juive* of Russian literature: Liia feels isolated among her people but perceives her Gentile beloved as closer to her than any of her own kind; however, she is trapped in the world of Jewry, unwillingly complicit in its horrendous activities.<sup>109</sup> Liia embodies the capacity for love that Olinskii seeks. She shows that Jews, too, are capable of the all-consuming love that weakened Olinskii earlier in the novel. What had been portrayed as a Russian national trait is now revealed to be a feature also of the angelic Jewess. Vagner in his novel thus presents a dichotomy in the demonic and angelic Jewess that echoes the traditional one between the male Jew and the *belle juive*. Vagner's dichotomy is also gendered, with one Jewess possessing masculine qualities such as aggression and the other Jewess feminine ones of humility and devotedness.

Liia is not an exception among the Jewesses in the novel in all respects. Unlike the calm love associated with the Russian angelic woman Lena, Olinskii's love for the Jewish angel and her love for him is associated with madness, just as Olinskii's love for Sara was. Liia has inherited from her mother a propensity to lose her sanity when she suffers from unhappy love; she thus shares with Sara the 'Jewish' tendency towards madness. For his part, Olinskii's love for Liia is one of the factors preventing him from working towards the goals of his circle. While one might expect his love for her to inspire him in his attempts to foster love for all humanity, after he has met her he begins to see love as a disease that inhibits one's ability to care for others.<sup>110</sup> *Temnyi put'* therefore even associates love for a good Jewess with higher forces that enslave one.

The novel consistently links Jewish women not only with madness but also with the distraction of Russians from their quest for justice and their sense of national belonging. Although Liia does not intend this to occur, Olinskii's love for her makes him leave Russia for Europe in search of her, since he learns that her father is taking her to various places there in search of treatment, at first for her inherited lung disease and

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 391.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 392.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 410–11.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 446–48.

later for her inherited madness. Olinskii eventually tracks Liia down in a women's asylum in Prussia, where he and her father witness her death, caused presumably by the harm that she has done her body through her self-imposed starvation and other manifestations of her insanity, which in turn can at least partly be attributed to her frustrated love for Olinskii. Olinskii begins to get used to European life, and this precipitates his later permanent stay there (doctors advise him not to return to Russia after he suffers another mental breakdown following Liia's death), which in turn makes him feel alienated from Russia.<sup>111</sup> While Lena inspires with her mission in Poland and she and other Russians – mainly women – continue to give him hope after they have died, Liia only reinforces the novel's sense of futility. Jewesses thus embody the prevailing mood of the novel regardless of whether they are demonic or angelic.

However, Liia does have effects on Olinskii that he deems positive. While Jews throughout the novel had aroused sexual passion and thereby weakened Olinskii's will, Liia indirectly encourages him to live an ascetic lifestyle: so powerful is his love for her that when he finds out she is dying in a mental hospital he relinquishes all his usual vices – even the pleasure of rich food.<sup>112</sup>

Most significantly, Liia's death leads to what one can only interpret as a scene of national reconciliation on a micro level between Olinskii and Mr Gaber:

И вдруг, в эту минуту, я почувствовал, что он – этот одинокий, убитый горем старик, этот человек – несчастнее меня, что он действительно лишен всего, всей его радости и поддержки. Я плакал и слезы мои текли по его седой, дрожащей от рыданий голове.

Смерть! Одна смерть, думал я, все соединяет!..

Despite the narrator's pessimistic observation, the novel shows that love as well as death can unite all – albeit only in the latter's presence. Indeed, at the end of the novel this exceptional Jewish father and daughter are shown not only as 'fully human' but also as embodying love.

Although Vagner appears to have intended Liia and her father to demonstrate his acceptance that there were exceptions to his typical image of the Jew, in fact the portrayal of them reveals the full extent of the novel's antisemitism and misogyny. A corollary of the fear of the power of Jews and particularly of Jewish women that is

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., II, pp. 466–67.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., II, p. 460.

evident in the novel would be a desire for this power to be transformed into weakness, and the novel only portrays a fully human and sympathetic Jewish father-daughter pair once it has deprived them of all power. Liia and her father represent not so much good Jews as Jews from whom all the threats that the novel has identified as inherent to Jews have been exorcised. When Olinskii met Liia she possessed sexual allure but did not exploit it; by the end of the novel she has even lost this: her illness has reduced her to a barely recognizable skeleton.<sup>113</sup> Olinskii is only able to love a woman who is powerless to affect him sexually: he believes that the only time he truly loved a woman was when he saw Liia dying.<sup>114</sup> The novel thus uses Liia to ‘exorcise’ the demon that it has shown to inhabit female, particularly Jewish female, sexuality. The experience with Liia appears to allow Olinskii to wrest himself from the grip of physicality, which the novel has consistently associated with Jews. Through killing the angelic Jewess by involuntarily driving her to death, Olinskii exorcises some of the demons that had tormented him: although he falls into apathy after her death, his passion has cooled and he spends his life recalling the great women he had loved, rather than pursuing further sexual adventures. On the other hand, although Liia does represent the possibility for Jewish beauty to embody spiritual beauty rather than to enslave males in physical desire, the ending of the novel continues to portray her in physical terms through focusing on the sickness of her mind and body. The novel makes such a strong connection between Jewish women and the physical realm with its enslaving and weakening desires that even the only positive Jewess comes to represent this sphere. This portrayal makes her declarations of love to Olinskii appear uncanny, first, because of her insanity (itself partly a result of physical disease), and, second, because they come from what is almost a corpse. Consequently, the novel even denigrates the Jewish capacity for love.

One might surmise that Vagner intended Liia to constitute the most remarkable Jewess of the novel, embodying the possibility of Jewish redemption and of brotherhood between Jews and Russians. However, one’s final impression of Liia is one of physical and mental weakness; rather than embodying the capacity for love (as opposed to the capacity for hatred, like other Jews in the novel), she succumbs to it. It is Sara who stands out in the novel, appearing as a strong, distinctive character displaying great passion and fortitude, for example, when she fights Olinskii. Although Vagner may well have intended his work to convey the more ambiguous image of the Jewess

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., II, p. 463.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., II, p. 460.

and of Jews that his depiction of Lilia helps to fashion, the novel ultimately belongs to the demonic, not the angelic, Jewess.

### 3. Vera Kryzhanovskaia's *Mertvaia petlia*

#### Kryzhanovskaia's Devils Incarnate

While Vagner's novel betrays some ambivalence regarding Jews and Russia's future, Kryzhanovskaia was a woman of strong convictions, and one of the reasons why she has been chosen for comparison is the absolute ideological certainty of her texts. She was such a convinced adherent of spiritualism that she claimed that many of her works (although not those discussed here) were dictated to her by the spirit of the English poet Count J. W. Rochester (1647–80), hence her pseudonyms Rochester-Kryzhanovskaia and Rochester.<sup>115</sup> Written in both French and Russian, her oeuvre consists principally of historical, occult, romance and science-fiction novels. Some of her novels presage apocalyptic battles between good and evil as a result of the decline of faith and morality among Europeans and the rise to power of Masons, Jews and other 'foreigners' and advocates of liberalism and capitalism. Although her historical novels won her the title of officer of the French Academy,<sup>116</sup> Kryzhanovskaia was ignored or ridiculed by 'serious' Russian critics, and she published many of her works in right-wing journals and newspapers.<sup>117</sup> Occult journals typically commended and trusted her occult insight and the chauvinistic views for which they frequently served as a vessel.<sup>118</sup>

*Mertvaia petlia* (1906) and a number of other texts by her with a similar ideological bent were written in reaction to an era of even greater suspicion of outsiders and non-conformists and uncertainty about the future than Vagner's works, in the wake of the failed 1905 Revolution and defeat in the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese war.<sup>119</sup> These works constitute maximally antisemitic, reactionary tracts that equate the genocide of Jewry in Russia with ridding the country of the Antichrist and the only way that Russians can save themselves from obliteration – a solution analogous to that entertained by Vagner in his article in memory of Darwin but that is not explicitly

<sup>115</sup> Reitblat, pp. 173–74.

<sup>116</sup> Dudakov, *IOM*, p. 175.

<sup>117</sup> Reitblat, p. 174.

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, the review of her occult novel *V tsarstve t'my* (1914) in the occult journal *Izida*: 'автор подробно знакомит со сферой зла и даже вводит, так сказать, в нее читателя, описывая попутно те соблазны, коими сатанизм, пользуясь одновременно и жизненными испытаниями, совращает с пути истинного прогресса многих, не твердо стоящих на нравственно религиозных началах людей'. D. Travin, 'Bibliografiia. V. I. Kryzhanovskaia – "V tsarstve t'my", okkul'tnyi roman. SPb. 1914 g.', *Izida*, 8 (1914), p. 25.

<sup>119</sup> Notable examples include her short stories 'Na Moskve: Son v osenniu noch' [1906], in V. I. Rochester (pseudonym), *Spasenie. Trilogia: roman, son v osenniu noch' i skaz*, comp. by V. P. Koval'kov (Moscow, 2004), pp. 153–59, and 'Pokaiavshiisia razboinik: skaz' [1908], in *Spasenie*, pp. 160–68; and her novel *Pautina*: V. I. Rochester-Kryzhanovskaia, *Pautina* (Revel' [Tallinn], 1906).

advocated in *Temnyi put'*. For Kryzhanovskaia, there can be no reconciliation: Jews' demonism, which is an inherent racial feature, renders all Jews determined to inflict pain and humiliation on non-Jews and to enslave and eventually destroy them.

A comparison of the demonic Jewesses of Wagner's 'Mirra' and *Temnyi put'* with that of Kryzhanovskaia's short story 'Pokaivshiisia razboinik' (1908) provides insights into the changing politicization of the motif, and the more extreme demonization to which Kryzhanovskaia subjects her Jewesses. In Kryzhanovskaia's work, a 22-year-old Russian man awaits a death sentence for his involvement in violent revolutionary activity, which included beating priests and which culminated in the murder of a dignitary. A beautiful Jewess had encouraged him to perform these actions in a similar way to Mirra: through offering him her body, money, glory and a 'mysterious power', and assuring him that he would be helping a persecuted nation, the Jews.<sup>120</sup> The former revolutionary, who regrets his deeds and has now turned to God, equates the act with renouncing God and 'giving himself' to Satan.<sup>121</sup> Kryzhanovskaia therefore portrays Jewish female seductiveness as a force arousing hunger for money and pride and inciting hatred of and violence against God and the Russian nation. Kryzhanovskaia is more explicit than Wagner in linking the Jewess to Satan, and this incitement to blasphemous violence is only hinted at in 'Mirra', in which the Jewess unsuccessfully attempts to persuade the Prince to stamp on a crucifix.

More directly than 'Pokaivshiisia razboinik', *Mertvaia petlia* expresses the worldview and promotes the activities of state-supported far-right antisemitic groups such as Soiuz russkogo naroda (SRN), of which both Kryzhanovskaia and Nicholas II were supporters.<sup>122</sup> In this connection, Kellogg notes:

The Imperial Russian radical right in general tended to view the Orthodox Christian struggle against Jewry and Freemasonry as the final battle between Christ and Anti-Christ along the lines of the last book of the Bible, Revelation. Apocalyptic anti-Semitism formed an integral component of the Imperial Russian far right.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> 'Pokaivshiisia razboinik', p. 162.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>122</sup> Jonathan Frankel, *Crisis*, p. 60.

<sup>123</sup> Michael Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism, 1917–1945* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 33–34.

SRN was established in November 1905 with the stated aim of fighting reform and revolution and defending the monarchy, Russian Orthodoxy and the empire.<sup>124</sup> It has been described as ‘an early Russian version of the Fascist movement’.<sup>125</sup> SRN believed that a ‘Judeo-Masonic constitution’ had been forced onto the country,<sup>126</sup> and that all Russia’s problems were the fault of the Jews.<sup>127</sup> Accordingly, Kryzhanovskaia presents the 1905 Revolution and the subsequent political measures as evidence of Jews’ progress in their quest to dominate and destroy Russia. While figures in SRN called variously for severe restrictions on Jewish rights, internal exile, expulsion and extermination, Kryzhanovskaia sees the only solution in the last of these measures.<sup>128</sup> The novel constitutes the literary equivalent to SRN’s pamphlets, many of which were directly inspired by the *Protocols*, calling on Russians to fight the revolutionary and Jewish threat.<sup>129</sup> Street violence against revolutionaries and Jews, which *Mertvaya petlia* explicitly sponsors, was directly instigated by SRN and carried out by the infamous paramilitary groups known as the *Chernosotentsy*, who derived principally from the lower classes. They were responsible for much of the pogrom violence that reached an unprecedented scale and ferocity in the period following the revolution.<sup>130</sup>

In order fully to convince the reader of the rectitude of genocide against Jews, Kryzhanovskaia has them commit violence and murder against innocent people, ostensibly for the sake of political goals of benefit to the masses of all national groups in Russia, but actually in order to weaken Russia and further their conspiratorial aims. Kryzhanovskaia uses such violence to portray Jews as Antichrists and despisers of Russians. For example, in one scene Jews attack peasants peacefully participating in a religious procession; they carry out a bomb attack on them and beat them and spit on their icons.<sup>131</sup> Jews did indeed figure prominently in radical movements and were involved in violence against political figures, but Kryzhanovskaia distorts for her ideological purposes the true situation in Russia.<sup>132</sup> She presents violence not as the

<sup>124</sup> William Korey, *Russian Antisemitism, Pamyat, and the Demonology of Zionism* (Chur, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>125</sup> Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (London, 1996), p. 196.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>127</sup> Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, 1988), p. 240.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>129</sup> Rogger, p. 210.

<sup>130</sup> The two weeks following the declaration of the October Manifesto saw 690 documented pogroms and over 3,000 reported murders. See Figes, p. 197.

<sup>131</sup> *MP*, p. 221.

<sup>132</sup> Frankel states that during the period 1903–05 Jews constituted 30% of political arrestees. Frankel, *Crisis*, p. 60.

exceptional approach of some radical Jews as it was in actuality, but as the central goal of groups such as the Bund. Moreover, her narrative explicitly rejects the fact that much Jewish violence constituted self-defence in response to the pogroms of 1903–06, asserting that this is a mere excuse for violence motivated by desire for bloodshed and domination. Rather, *Mertvaia petlia* portrays pogroms themselves as a form of Russian self-defence, and, moreover, one that demonstrates great self-sacrifice, although Kryzhanovskaia shows that the authorities, the press and liberals, brainwashed by the Jews, perceive them as constituting Russian persecution of Jews.<sup>133</sup> *Mertvaia petlia* breaks with the tradition of portraying Jews as nefarious but not directly violent: violence overtakes the traditional qualities of cunningness and deceit as Jews' chief means of achieving their goals.

The novel also breaks with the tradition of portraying Jewish women as possessing distinct characteristics not shared by their male counterparts, i.e. a destructive sexual allure. In *Mertvaia petlia*, both women and men possess this powerful weapon. Consequently, the role of precipitating Russians' downfall through morally and physically corrupting Russian men through sex and intimate relationships – assigned in other works exclusively to women – is shared by men and women. *Mertvaia petlia* is an unusual text within this dissertation in that it does not portray its Jewess as significantly distinctive vis-à-vis the male Jew and therefore does not problematize the Jewess. One of my principal arguments in this chapter is therefore that *Mertvaia petlia* is an example of a text in which antisemitism is so extreme and so dominant that gender differences among Jews, although they do not disappear, recede: antisemitism trumps gender difference such that it is racial difference that dominates. Gender difference prevails among Russians in the novel, however, and the heroine is endowed with stereotypical attributes such as stubborn adherence to moral strictures, a capacity for self-sacrifice and, apparently, the power of clairvoyance.

Although a Jewess is central to one of the events that set the plot in motion (the marriage of a Jewess to a Russian prince), what is significant about the event is not the marriage of a Jewish woman to a Russian man as such, but the opportunity it represents for Jews to further their incursion into the Russian family. Consequently, the novel presents marriages of Jewish men to Russian women as at least as significant within the Jewish world-conspiracy as those of Jewish women to Russian men. In a similar vein, in a key scene at the end of the novel a Jewess and a male Jew are shown as equal participants in an act of blasphemy. In my analysis of *Mertvaia petlia* I give more

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<sup>133</sup> MP, p. 222.

attention than I usually do in this thesis to Jewish men, an approach justified, first, by the lesser prominence of Jewish women in the novel compared to other works in this thesis, and, second, by the fact that one can take representations of Jewish men to be broadly representative of Kryzhanovskaia's view of Jewry as a whole and therefore of Jewish women. I show that one of the reasons why Jewish women are less prominent in this work than in, say, *Temnyi put'* is that, as noted above, Kryzhanovskaia is concerned to demonstrate not only the moral and ideological corruption by the Jews central to Wagner's work but also to show how Jews achieve their goals through outright violence. Although both male and female Jews are portrayed as participating in violence, the male Jew serves somewhat better to embody this aspect of Jewry for Kryzhanovskaia. However, as we shall see, the Jewess serves well to attack Russians in another key way, through humiliation.

Kryzhanovskaia employs Krestovskii's and Wagner's device of documenting programmatic speeches by rich, prominent and respected members of the Jewish community detailing Jews' plans to take over the world. Also like her predecessors, Kryzhanovskaia thereby provides her readers with an ideological framework through which to interpret the actions of Jews in the novel. At the beginning of *Mertvaia petlia*, the millionaire banker Moisei Solomonovich Aronshtein gathers Jews at his house to announce and celebrate the engagement of his daughter Sarra to a titled Russian Gentile and the head of the province, Prince Pronskii. While Krestovskii's and Wagner's Jews spoke of world domination through control of finance, indoctrination with liberal and atheist ideals and manipulation of world politics as an ongoing process, in Kryzhanovskaia's novel this process is already almost complete in Russia. Aronshtein's relative Bernshtein declares:

— Без всякого преувеличения теперь уже можно сказать, что труднейшая часть этой подготовительной работы закончена. Обеднение и упадок дворянства идет своей дорогой, денационализация, на подкладке “либерализма” и равнодушия к вере, подвигается исполинскими шагами, захватывая высшие классы, школы и рабочую массу, т. е. армию будущей революции. Наконец, самое трудное — несправедливое и возмутительное предубеждение против нас, которое выросло на почве долгих веков нашего унижения, скоро исчезнет.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> V. I. Kryzhanovskaia, *Mertvaia petlia* (hereafter *MP*), in Kryzhanovskaia, *Novyi vek. Sbornik povestei i rasskazov* (St Petersburg, 1916), pp. 103–277 (p. 112).

According to Kryzhanovskaia, the moral corruption by Jews of the Russian nobility and that class's distance from the Russian people have worsened over the decades since Wagner's similar identification of these phenomena. More importantly, the Jews have gone beyond indoctrination and sexual adventures actually to enter the Russian nobility directly through marriage, exploiting the fact that the antisemitism that had previously protected most Russians from such disastrous actions is on the wane.

Sarra's achievement marks a significant step in Jewry's weakening of the Russian nobility and their own simultaneous strengthening, since Sarra wishes to marry Georgii in order to acquire the title of princess; for his part, Georgii, whose first wife had died, wants to rescue his family from financial ruin with the fortune that the marriage will give him. The theme central to literature relating to the world-conspiracy of Jewesses infiltrating the Russian nobility so that the Jews can usurp its power is taken further in Kryzhanovskaia's novel, which portrays the nobility as being forced into marrying rich Jews despite their anti-Jewish prejudices because they have fallen into relative poverty. Through their incursion into the Russian family, the Jews pollute and desecrate the four things that Kryzhanovskaia holds so dear in her nation: nationality/race, class, autocracy and Orthodoxy. For example, Jews such as Sarra adopt Christianity without even pretending to do so for any reason other than to make the marriage legal and while continuing to remain faithful to Judaism in thought and deed. They also use the houses of the noble families in which they have infiltrated as the site of radical meetings. The Jews therefore bring down Orthodoxy and Russian political power from within the Russian family.

Class is central to the novel's ideology. Kryzhanovskaia shows that the Russian middle classes and to a lesser extent the nobility have been taken over by the Jewish contagion: most middle-class Russians and many members of the nobility support atheism, cosmopolitanism, revolutionary activity and the overthrow of the monarchy. Behind this worldview lurks the writer's fear that the bourgeoisie will destroy the class system and the privileges it gives members of the nobility such as Kryzhanovskaia, as well as the monarchy that she so cherishes. Like SRN, Kryzhanovskaia views as essential the reconciliation of the Russian upper classes with the lower classes, perceiving them both as consisting of 'true' Russians, unlike the middle classes with their cosmopolitan bureaucrats.<sup>135</sup> Both Wagner's and Kryzhanovskaia's novels give one the impression that, whatever low the nobility as a whole might have reached, one can

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<sup>135</sup> Rogger, p. 200.

still find among it good, strong Russians. Another impression that one gains from both novels is that, although the people has remained truer to its nation, only the nobility potentially has the resources and strength to guide Russia's future. Where Kryzhanovskaia does differ from Wagner is in her more positive portrayal of the nobility, which is more resistant to Jewish encroachment than in *Temnyi put'*, and in her attribution to the people of a role in the battle against Jews, as front-line participants in the violence against them, in line with SRN policy. Unlike other classes, which have fallen into liberal tolerance of Jews and philosemitism (although the nobility has fared better than the middle classes in this respect), the people according to *Mertvaia petlia* have on the whole retained their hatred of Jews and therefore remained true to their nation. In *Temnyi put'*, on the other hand, although the narrator extols the people, one sees very little of them apart from as victims of Jewish exploitation.

While Krestovskii gave some of his patriarchal Jews noble origins and thereby won them the qualified respect of the reader, a central feature of Kryzhanovskaia's antisemitism is her insistence that race determines class and that nobility is fundamentally incompatible with the Jewish 'race'.<sup>136</sup> A comparison of Kryzhanovskaia's description of Prince Pronskii and of Jews will demonstrate the importance she attaches to 'race' and class. Pronskii is described thus: 'Высокого роста, худощавый и стройный он очень походил на мать; у него были такие-же, как у нее, голубые глаза и тот-же холодно гордый вид. [...] От него веяло бесспорным, врожденным благородством.'<sup>137</sup> The prince is distinguished by self-control and pride, and is described as possessing noble features as a result of birth. Jews, in contrast, are described as trying to imitate dignity and elegance but failing because of their inherited, racial lowliness and dirtiness. The following is a description of the Jews gathered at the Aronshteins:

Собрание было типичное. Несмотря на изысканные костюмы и роскошь окружавшей обстановки, пошлость этих носатых господ с размашистыми манерами била в глаза; жаргон, употреблявшийся в своем кругу, звучал несносно крикливо, потому что многие говорили за-раз, стараясь перекричать друг друга. Наконец, ни куренья, ни духи не могли заглушить тот специфический запах, который еврей, подобно негру,

<sup>136</sup> On the notion that racism evolved from ideologies of class, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York and London, 2006), p. 149.

<sup>137</sup> MP, p. 108.

распространяет вокруг себя, и в кабинете стоял тяжелый, неприятный воздух.<sup>138</sup>

While the prince's splendid appearance reflects his true nature, the Jews' is entirely artificial and immediately recognizable as such; a further contrast is the Jews' lack of self-control. Kryzhanovskaia demonstrates that the Jews' physical unpleasantness is racial, first, by describing their odour as 'specific' (i.e. to their race); second, by showing that their odour cannot be overcome by any artificial means; and third, by comparing it with that of another group of people considered to be a lower race, blacks.

Like all Kryzhanovskaia's Jews, the Aronshteins are parvenus, having risen from dire poverty and initially worked in lowly positions but having subsequently acquired great wealth 'by means known only to Jews'<sup>139</sup> and advanced in society through deception and immoral methods. This destruction of the Russian upper classes is one of the final steps in the Jewish destruction of the Russian nation: the mixing of social classes is shown to be tantamount to racial miscegenation, and Russians' preservation of their racial essence is essential to Russian national survival. Kryzhanovskaia has her Jews perceive the relationship between Jews and Russians as a racial war, for example, a Jewish student at the Aronshteins' gathering declaims: 'мы должны презирать наших гонителей, дать им почувствовать наше отвращение, нашу ненависть и доказать, что низшая раса это – они!'<sup>140</sup> Indeed, one of the Jews' victories, brought about by the breakdown of the Russian family and the corruption of Russian culture, is the collapse of racial and class barriers: 'Распад семьи, исковерканное воспитание, извращенная литература растлили общество и опрокинули сословные и расовые перегородки.'<sup>141</sup> Such a situation allows Jews to exploit Russians as much as they like, based on their belief that God placed non-Jews on the level of animals and the latter therefore have no rights.<sup>142</sup>

### Russian Retaliation and Salvation

The only defences against the Jews are Christian faith, antisemitism and the use of force inspired by them. Steadfast faith has kept the Jews in Russia at bay until recently. Indeed, a rabbi terms Russia 'the last stronghold of the cross'; the Jews recognize

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

Russian holiness and its position at the forefront in the battle against evil.<sup>143</sup> The coming revolution represents the horror of Jewish dominion that results from Jews' brainwashing of Russians into relinquishing their faith and God-honoured racial prejudices. It is for this reason that Kryzhanovskaia makes the heroine of her novel Prince Pronskii's daughter Nina, who is not only a Russian noblewoman but has also retained her Orthodox faith, Russian patriotism and hatred of Jews and is therefore able to offer resistance against their encroachment.

The power of faith is proved towards the end of the novel. The Jewish revolutionary leader Enokh (Sarra's cousin) has forced Nina to marry him by holding her father hostage and threatening to kill him. Yet Nina manages to survive unscathed during an attack by Russian peasant supporters of the tsar on Enokh's house, where she is imprisoned. One is encouraged to conclude that her safety is secured by the fact that she prays clutching an icon of Saint Nicholas. Nina is also freed from Jewish tyranny: Enokh is killed by the man whom she loves, who comes to her rescue. Nina's faith in God and the devotion and faith of the peasants and her beloved save her.

Although the violence unleashed in self-defence at this point is insufficient to overthrow the Jewish dominion, Kryzhanovskaia is more optimistic than Vagner. For her there is at least a counter-force to the demonic powers tearing Russia apart, and in the final words of the novel she has Nina, who is ever faithful not only to God but also to her nation, predict a Russian victory over Jewry:

Чудо! Всегда Святая Русь спасалась чудом! – восторженно и убежденно ответила Нина. – Наши *невидимые покровители*, эти чистые и мощные духом народные печальники, заступятся за нас перед троном Предвечного. Их молитвенный порыв разбудит Русскую душу от векового сна, а народ-богатырь страхнет оковы, учинит расправу за все совершенные против него мерзости и железной метлой сметет всю нечисть, преграждающую путь развития его гения и славы. Бог наказует теперь для того, чтобы образумить нас и вывести из равнодушного оцепенения. По образному выражению поэта:

Так тяжкий млат,  
Дробя стекло, кует булат.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

Whereas Wagner only found a supernatural force of any significance acting against Russians, Kryzhanovskaia is convinced of the existence of a force fighting for them. Also, while Wagner and others lambasted Russians for national qualities that rendered Jewish dominion inevitable, Kryzhanovskaia identifies Russians as a nation loved by God and therefore guaranteed salvation no matter what catastrophe besets them.

### **The Cunning Malice of the Jewess**

Kryzhanovskaia's description of Sarra combines references to her racial origin and demonic nature:

Невеста князя была красивая девушка лет двадцати трех, восточного типа, высокая, хорошо сложенная, с ярко-пунсовыми губками, черными, как смоль, волосами и жгучими глазами; нос был с горбиком и цвет кожи матовой белизны. Белое кружевное, подбитое белым же шелком платье обрисовывало ее стройный стан; короткие рукава обнажали красивые руки, а полуоткрытый лиф вырисовывал уже пышный бюст. Жемчужное ожерелье с бриллиантовой брошью украшало шею, и у пояса был приколот букет роз. Это была чудная представительница своей расы, но ей не хватало лишь обаяния чистой девической прелести, а взгляд, блестивший порою из-под пушистых черных ресниц, был жестокий, лукавый и надменный.<sup>145</sup>

Sarra's appearance reflects her desire provocatively to accentuate her sexual attractiveness and availability and her possession of wealth. However, unlike Wagner in *Temnyi put'*, Kryzhanovskaia does not make sexuality and sexual attractiveness the dominant demonic traits of her Jewess. In the above description of Sarra, Kryzhanovskaia brings the adjectives 'cruel', 'cunning' and 'haughty' to the fore. Similarly, the qualities that stand out in Sarra in the novel as a whole are her vindictive cruelty, pride, greed, and the cunning that she employs in order to satisfy these urges. The significance of the adjective in the description referring to her cunning, '*lukavyi*', is indicated by the fact that it can stand on its own for the devil. Her cunning informs her actions throughout the novel, as she pursues various schemes in order to enhance herself and other Jews socially and avenge the rejection that she faces within the Pronskii

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

family. Kryzhanovskaia is even more explicit than Wagner in identifying her Jewess as demonic. One time, when Sarra feels particularly insulted by Gregorii, Kryzhanovskaia describes her thus:

Ее мертвенно бледное, искаженное лицо и горевшие ненавистью глаза  
дышили чисто дьявольской злобой.

— Погоди, — думала она, злобно сжимая кулаки. — Ох, как ты дорого  
мне заплатишь за все эти оскорблении!<sup>146</sup>

While Wagner's Jewess is largely concerned with exploiting, albeit while occasionally manifesting cruelty, Kryzhanovskaia's is driven by the urge to inflict cruel, painful humiliation. The full extent of Sarra's vengefulness and cruelty is provoked, first, by Arsenii's refusal to treat her as his wife, particularly his unwillingness to accompany her to social occasions and thereby assist her social advancement; second, by Nina's insults against her racial origin and insistence that she can never rise above her low social origins; and, third, by Nina's equally derogatory rejection of Enokh.

Jewish humiliation of Russians within the novel wields a level of power comparable to that of violence. The humiliation of seeing her son marry a Jewess is too much for Prince Pronskii's mother, Evdokiia, who hates Jews unconditionally: she dies of shame almost immediately upon learning of the planned marriage.<sup>147</sup> Given that Evdokiia potentially constituted a significant obstacle to the marriage and therefore to Sarra's overall scheme, and given the power of Sarra's vindictiveness and Kryzhanovskaia's portrayal of her as in league with Satan, Kryzhanovskaia may be prompting the reader to view Evdokiia's death as a direct consequence of the operation of Sarra's will. Kryzhanovskaia therefore associates her Jewess with death far more directly than Wagner does.

A further sign of Sarra's greater power and danger is that she has far more resources at her disposal than her allure. She does not need to prostitute herself in order to earn money, a title and power: through her wealth and scheming, she is able to make the Prince effectively prostitute himself by selling her his title. If one views *Mertvaia petlia* within the tradition of the portrayal of demonic Jewish women in Russian literature, it is as if Kryzhanovskaia is indicating in her novel their growing power: while traditionally they were portrayed as relying on selling themselves to Russian men

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

in order to gain money and power, in *Mertvaia petlia* they have effectively reversed the situation.

Although sexual attractiveness in other instances of mixed marriages in the novel is essential to Jews' securing such unions, it is once these marriages have begun that Jews are able to deliver the full force of their campaign against Russians through humiliation and physical violence. I shall now discuss in greater depth Kryzhanovskaia's treatment of Jewish seductiveness and explore how it relates to the violence and humiliation that they inflict on Russians.

While in the late nineteenth century the Jewess was singled out as a direct sexual threat, with the male Jew posing an indirect threat via his involvement in prostitution, in the twentieth century the male Jew began to be portrayed as able to wield the same deadly sexual allure as the Jewess, as noted in relation to Kuprin's *Iama* in Chapter One. *Mertvaia petlia* explicitly links Jewish males' ability to attract Russian women to their possession of diabolical powers. Enokh's beauty is described as 'demonic'<sup>148</sup> and his exceptional singing ability as reflecting something satanic.<sup>149</sup> Bernshtein explains Jewish men's ability to overcome Russian women's natural disgust towards them thus: 'Наши артисты обладают секретом воспламенять их страсти'.<sup>150</sup> Initially, by attracting and marrying noble and prominent Russian men using their natural beauty, Jewish women had 'cleared the way' for their male brethren to marry Russian women. There is now a kind of parity between Jewish males and females, with both marrying into noble Russian families in approximately equal numbers. The gradual victory of Jewish sexuality, especially Jewish male sexuality, is a victory of Jewish physicality over Russian spirituality: Jews have so distorted Russian desire that they have directed it towards qualities that should repulse truly Christian Russians. Kryzhanovskaia combines modern racial and sexual antisemitism with ancient fears of Jewish demonism: according to the novel, the Jewish demonic nature is fostering unnatural sexual desires that result in unnatural miscegenation, which in turn is leading to the unnatural dominance of a lower race, the Jews, over a higher race, the Russians.

Kryzhanovskaia presents Jews as hypersexual, driven by a lust that makes them employ manipulation, literal enchantment through their demonic powers, force and violence in order to obtain the objects of their desire. Kryzhanovskaia identifies Jewish hypersexuality as a racial feature, writing of Enokh: 'в его жилах не даром текла

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

мятежная восточная кровь, не умеющая сдерживать свои порывы'.<sup>151</sup> Race therefore endows both male and female Jews with a predatory sexuality characterized by the desire to inflict pain, humiliation and moral ruin. Jewish predatory sexuality becomes a metaphor for the moral and economic rape of Russia by the Jews. Marriage with Jewish men represents a threat to the physical and mental well-being of Russian women. Nina's cousin Lili marries a Jew, Leizer, who appears charming, loving, liberal and open-minded before marriage. Upon marrying her, he shows his true self, stealing from her, treating her with contempt out of racism and misogyny, and beating her with the help of two Jewish friends for becoming angry at such treatment, threatening to kill her should she demand a divorce.<sup>152</sup>

Kryzhanovskaia urges her reader to perceive Jewish attractiveness as a cover provided by Satan in order to aid Jews in acting on their hatred of Gentiles and their wish to dominate and humiliate them. Consequently, Russian disgust at Jews may be seen as a kind of divine power, possessed only by the spiritually strongest. Enokh's artistic talent is so powerful that he even manages for one moment to enchant Nina, whom he wishes to marry, with his singing, despite her being the character whom the novel identifies as possessing the most proper and heroic antisemitic attitude; fortunately, Nina quickly comes to her senses.<sup>153</sup> Nina's ability (and the Prince's lesser ability) to resist the Jews' allure demonstrates the strength of these Russians. Whereas in *Temnyi put'* Jewish sexuality highlighted the hero's weakness and the hopelessness of the situation in Russia, *Mertvaia petlia* uses Jewish sexuality to demonstrate its heroes' capacity to resist the Jewish contagion and to point to a more optimistic future for Russia.

Not only resisting Jewish sexuality but even falling victim to it can lead one to contribute to the Russian defence. Through an incident involving Sarra, Kryzhanovskaia shows that such a transgression can engender in Russians a sense of humiliation and shame so strong that it can provoke the enraged victims to commit the killing that Kryzhanovskaia presents as the only solution to the Jewish takeover. Kryzhanovskaia therefore uses her presentation of a forceful, violent and manipulative Jewish female and male hypersexuality in order to support her argument for the need to obliterate Jews.

In the incident in question, Sarra satisfies both her desire for revenge at the Pronskii family's scornful treatment of her and her sexual desire by seducing Georgii's

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

son and her stepson, Arsenii.<sup>154</sup> Sarra's sexuality is therefore not only linked with her vindictiveness, but is also portrayed as perverted, since she seduces a close family member. Within Kryzhanovskaia's worldview this may constitute an act even more degenerate and degrading than beating one's wife. In her description of the seduction Kryzhanovskaia invokes the usual stereotypes about the demonic Jewess's means of seduction. Sarra's success owes something to the alcohol with which she plies him (and which may contain a narcotic), but her demonic powers may be supposed to play a role, too, so strongly does she provoke the desire of her stepson, who is disciplined and proud. Jewish female sexuality is portrayed as a force opposing and potentially weakening the Russian military: despite his recent attainment of the rank of officer, Arsenii's shame leads him to consider suicide. Sarra's seduction, which was in any case carried out in a forceful manner, is thus placed in the context of violence. However, Sarra's sexual hold on the Russian man is temporary, unlike that of Wagner's Sara. Moreover, it leads not to the downfall of its victim, but to his desire for vengeance and ultimately to her own death. Arsenii overcomes his initial anti-Christian thoughts of suicide to find the solution not in his own death but in Sarra's:

В душе Арсения росла непримиримая ненависть к этой роковой женщине, которая была причиной смерти бабушки, унизила его самого и является воплощенной бедой для всей их семьи. Теперь он не думал уже о смерти; он хотел прежде отомстить, уничтожить эту гадину и следить за тем, чтобы она не причинила вреда его близким, особенно Нине, которую та ненавидела, о чём он догадывался.<sup>155</sup>

The full connotations of Jewish sexuality are revealed towards the end of the novel. Arsenii, already intent on avenging Sarra's treatment of him, catches her, laughing like a witch, and another Jew, Kogan, removing the precious stones from an icon of the Virgin Mary that the Pronskii family has possessed for over three centuries; once they have removed all the stones, Kogan kicks the icon aside.<sup>156</sup> Sarra's and Kogan's blasphemous act prompts Arsenii, already inclined towards violence against the Jewess, to murder both of them. The Jews' sacrilege both symbolizes and contributes to the robbing of the Russian nobility by the Jews on the material, spiritual and social levels. It harms all that is Russian and, from Kryzhanovskaia's point of view,

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., pp. 162–65.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., pp. 233–35.

good, since it involves scornful abuse of a holy figure revered by Russians. It echoes one of the oldest antisemitic accusations, that Jews murdered Christ, as well as medieval allegations of Jews' desecration of the host and holy images.<sup>157</sup> Kryzhanovskaia has the Jewess symbolically despoil the Virgin Mary, a metaphor for the Jews' plundering and shaming of Russia as a holy entity and an act that, in the context of Sarra's and other Jews' aggressive sexuality, can be seen as akin to rape. Given that Sarra wears expensive ostentatious jewellery, the scene suggests that even her manner of dressing relates to her status as Antichrist, since one presumes that at least some of her jewellery has been obtained in a similarly blasphemous manner. Sarra's material greed, her lasciviousness and her contribution to the Jewish takeover of Russia are therefore all portrayed as contributing to a physical attack on the sacred figures of Christianity and the holy Russian nation. Although male Jews may be more able to commit actual violence against Russians of the opposite sex, the powerfully destructive effect of Jews of both sexes is equal (after all, Sarra caused actual death at the beginning of the novel), and therefore the metaphors of pillage and rape apply to Jews as a whole.

Where gender does play a significant role in the novel is in Kryzhanovskaia's portrayal of Jews' relationship to Russians through depictions of Russia and Russians as a humble and chaste woman being subjected to violence by masculine figures; this formulation echoes that found at the end of *Zhid idet*. A more explicit version of this image features in Kryzhanovskaia's short story 'Na Moskve', which is included in many editions of *Mertvaia petlia* immediately after the novel and therefore may be conceived as an expanded version of Nina's vision of an apocalyptic Russian victory over the Jews. A Jewish male executioner, supported by other radicals of whom many are evidently also Jews, prepares to quarter a Russian woman identified as representing Russia itself, provoking the rising from the dead of various tsars who, aided by Russians who have died fighting for their nation, save Russia. Before the act of salvation, Kryzhanovskaia gives the following image of Russia: 'Как стая голодных псов, они вплотную окружили женщину – величавой, небесной красоты. Лицо ее было смертельно-бледно, и в больших, спокойных серых глазах – кротких и ясных славянских глазах – читалась душевная мука...',<sup>158</sup>

Gender also plays a significant role in Kryzhanovskaia's depictions of Russians. In both *Mertvaia petlia* and 'Na Moskve', Russian women are identified as capable of seeing clearly the present situation of Russia and of prophesying Russians' glorious

<sup>157</sup> See J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (New Haven, 1943), pp. 124–39.

<sup>158</sup> 'Na Moskve', p. 156. On the notion of Russia as feminine, see Joanna Hubbs, *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture* (Bloomington, IN, and Indianapolis, 1988).

victory over the Jews, while it is males who can commit the violence needed to secure this victory.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> On occultism's particular attraction for women because of its foregrounding 'female' attributes such as intuition, see Rosenthal, 'Introduction', p. 15.

#### 4. Conclusion

Both Vagner and Kryzhanovskaia show the Jewish female demonic nature as comprising negative elements traditionally ascribed to male Jews such as greed and xenophobia. The demonic Jewess represents all the negative characteristics attributed to male Jews bolstered by the characteristics attributed to the ‘whore’ in the angel/whore dichotomy present in European literature, and therefore appears as perversely gendered: she takes all the strengths of the male Jew such as tenacity and cunningness and combines them with those of the female Jew so that she is even more powerful and destructive. While Kryzhanovskaia’s Jewess differs little from the male Jews of her novel, Vagner’s proves herself more masculine than the male Jews in at least one positive sense – through her bravery. The boldness of the demonic Jewess, which is cast in a far more negative light in *Mertvaia petlia*, is her most impressive feature. There is nothing positively masculine about male Jews in either work. For example, lacking the willingness to undergo physical confrontations on equal grounds with adversaries in order to protect their honour, male Jews limit their aggressiveness to acts in which there is little risk of harm to themselves. As both authors denigrate male Jews, so they have their Jewesses sully the feminine, such that they largely represent (with the exception of Vagner’s Liia) the reverse of the typical chaste, tolerant *belle juive* attracted to Christianity; although they share her attachment to the Jewish nation, theirs is a xenophobic attachment that possesses them and drives them to do evil against outsiders.

Both the typical *belle juive* story and Vagner’s and Kryzhanovskaia’s narratives are fundamentally conservative: the former upholds conservative values by striving to assimilate the outsider through demanding that she change and accept the Christian culture’s values; the latter uphold conservative values by portraying as catastrophic the change that the Jewess tries to impose on the Christian, Gentile order: rather than the Jewess pledging her soul to Christianity, the Gentile male is forced to sell his soul to the Jews and the devil. In the former, the Jewess’s sensuousness and exoticism are controlled and are part of her angelic nature, easing her transition to the non-Jewish world with the help of her Christian suitor. In the latter, these qualities control her non-Jewish suitor and threaten to estrange him from his world, marking her as demonic; the passivity that characterized her in the traditional *belle juive* tale is replaced by a ferocious ‘eastern temperament’.

On the one hand, the demonic Jewess is an addition to the literary types already discussed in the thesis. On the other hand, she constitutes an amalgamation of various of

their characteristics. For example, Chekhov provided an example of a sex-hungry, manipulative Jewess, but she lacked the bloodthirstiness and destructive purpose of the demonic Jewesses discussed in this chapter; even if she did destroy families, this was not one of her main aims. The demonic Jewess can also be seen as a variant of the assimilating Jewess – only her assimilation is a ruse designed to trap the Russian male and further the Jewish takeover of Russia and the world.

The combination of Jew and woman allows the writers to draw out key negative stereotypical attributes of both in order to make their Jewish female characters especially nefarious, as well as to further denigrate Jews in general and certain types of women in particular, such as educated liberals and radicals. For example, the stereotype of women as mysterious and indecipherable and as having an undeserved power over men enhances the presentation of Jews as in collusion with unseen, destructive forces. The stereotype of Jewish acquisitiveness combines in the Jewess with that of female hypersexuality to bolster the stereotype of Jews' preoccupation with the physical.

The demonic Jewess also serves to strengthen one's impression of Jews as unnatural. For example, in both writers' works the Jewess's feminine exterior and charms conceal her perversely masculine aggressiveness. Kryzhanovskaia pursues the idea of Jews as unnatural further than Vagner. The perception of Jews as unnatural can be traced from the medieval accusations, shared by late-tsarist Russian antisemites, that Jews were the spawn of the devil (to be born of the devil means to oppose all that is human and natural) right up to Kryzhanovskaia's and Hitler's brands of racial antisemitism, with their fears of racial contamination. One also sees the connection between evil and the unnatural in Russians' use of the word for 'unclean' in their term for 'evil spirit' (*'nechistaia sila'*). Racial 'science' paradoxically could support superstitious beliefs about Jews as devils: by identifying Jews either as inferior to non-Jews or, worse, as somehow superior and destructive to them, racial theory was able to attribute to Jews the same polluting, destructive essence that superstition attributed to them (as evinced, for example, in the medieval belief that Jews poisoned wells). There is little substantial difference between the belief that Jews are inexorably afflicted by their connection with the death of Jesus Christ and the claim that they are biologically determined to be fundamentally different to and nefarious towards non-Jews. The dual accusation of unnaturalness and a demonic nature explains why for Kryzhanovskaia two of the worst Jewish attributes are their striving to pollute noble Russian blood (an unnatural act) and their blasphemous (demonic) campaign against Orthodoxy and all that is good and Christian. The preservation of the purity of Russian blood and the

defence of Orthodoxy are so intertwined for Kryzhanovskaia that her interpretation of the unnatural and the demonic become similarly inseparable: every unnatural act is intended to hasten the Antichrist's securing of dominion. Unnaturalness can account for everything Jews are seen to represent, notably, capitalism, industrialization, social mobility and revolution. When viewed in this manner, the medieval accusation against Jews as able to intervene in the normal processes of nature appears remarkably adaptable to modern developments. A rigid social class and a monarchy are for Kryzhanovskaia not only morally right and proper, but also a part of the natural scheme of things. This is one of the reasons why the mixing of Russian and Jewish blood is equivalent for Kryzhanovskaia to attacks on the tsarist system. Vagner in *Temnyi put'*, on the other hand, does not pursue such an explicitly racial presentation of Jewish unnaturalness; he even relativizes his presentation of moral corruption by Jews and especially Jewesses by highlighting the ease with which Russians fall. However, the association between the unnaturalness of miscegenation and apostasy does feature in kernel form in his 'Mirra'.

Vagner's novel lacks the dichotomy between Jews as absolutely and fundamentally evil and impure and Russians as inherently good and pure that is present in Kryzhanovskaia's work. In particular, the appearance of a good Jewess and Jew at the end prevents one from interpreting the novel as striving to achieve the absolute demonization of Jews. It is hard to imagine a work as confused in its attribution of blame to the Jews for society's ills instigating pogroms in the way that Kryzhanovskaia's was clearly intended to. One can see some aspects of *Temnyi put'* in terms of European literature's tradition of ambiguous portrayals of Jews, for example, Mr Gaber bears a broad resemblance to Scott's Isaac: on the one hand, he appears mean, bigoted and xenophobic, yet on the other hand he has such love for his daughter that his life is meaningless without her. *Mertvaia petlia* has nothing in common with this relatively liberal tradition, lacking even the Jewish father-daughter relationship that so often added ambiguity to portrayals of Jews; even the novel's shared accusation of Jewish exploitativeness does not bear comparison with works from the more liberal tradition because this quality cannot be removed from the pogrom-inspiring rhetoric in which the novel places it. Kryzhanovskaia's novel is exclusively in the tradition of the far right.

All the same, one can understand why Vagner's novel has been seen as part of the culture that laid the groundwork for the most extreme forms of antisemitism that achieved popularity around the period of the 1905 Revolution. Even if one assumes that

Kryzhanovskaia had an intention in writing her work (violence against Jews) that Vagner did not and even though Kryzhanovskaia draws on racial discourse while this is only hinted at in *Temnyi put'*, many of the differences in the portrayal of the Jewess are differences only of degree. In Vagner's novel as in Kryzhanovskaia's the Jewess is not only a manipulative liar and vengeful, but also exhibits hatred for non-Jews and dedicates herself to bringing down Gentile civilization.

## Chapter Four

### Two Russian-Jewish Writers' Portrayals of Revolutionary Jewish Women: Aizman's *Ternovyi kust* and An-skii's *V novom rusle*

#### 1. Introduction: Underground Russia

The texts examined in this chapter constitute part of what Mogil'ner terms the 'mythological text of Underground Russia', which comprises literary works, radical prisoners' letters and obituaries, among other documents.<sup>1</sup> Mogil'ner finds little difference between the poetics of the literary texts and that of the non-fictional ones belonging to this world, stating that they form a 'common canon'.<sup>2</sup> At the centre of each of them is a positive revolutionary hero or heroine whose absolute dedication to and willingness to sacrifice himself or herself for the radical cause elevates and justifies it.<sup>3</sup> Often, this dedication manifests itself in violence: 'В годы первой русской революции, казалось, что террорист стал самым модным литературным персонажем'.<sup>4</sup> The mythologized world of radicals acquired the name 'Underground Russia' from Stepnjak-Kravchinskii's (Kravchinskii) collection of profiles of the populist-terrorist heroes and heroines of the 1870s and 1880s. *Podpol'naia Rossiia* (first published in Italian as *La Russia sotterranea* in 1882) is considered, along with Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat?*, one of the foundational texts of the culture and its code of behaviour.<sup>5</sup> Mogil'ner identifies it as the 'very first and most popular collection of revolutionary mythology'.<sup>6</sup> *Podpol'naia Rossiia* established the principal characteristics of radical heroes.<sup>7</sup> Boniece remarks that, while in *Chto delat?* only a minor character, Rakhmetov, fully adheres to the radical code of single-minded dedication to the cause, all Kravchinskii's subjects do so, 'present[ing] their revolutionary lifestyles and accomplishments as model behavior for aspiring radicals'.<sup>8</sup>

As Jewish-authored works on Jewish themes, the works examined in depth in this chapter, David Iakovlevich Aizman's (1869–1922) *Ternovyi kust* (1907) and Semen Akimovich An-skii's (real name: Shloime Zeinvil Rapoport, 1863–1920) *V novom rusle*

<sup>1</sup> Marina Mogil'ner, *Mifologiiia podpol'nogo cheloveka* (Moscow, 1999), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 41, 54.

<sup>4</sup> Mogil'ner, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Mogil'ner, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> Sally A. Boniece, 'The Spiridonova Case, 1906: Terror, Myth, and Martyrdom', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 3 (2003), 571–606 (p. 581).

(1907), stand out from most of the texts of Underground Russia. Works by another major Jewish writer of the period, Semen Solomonovich Iushkevich (1868–1927), will also be analysed in less detail in order to give a fuller picture of the image of the revolutionary Jewess in Russian-Jewish literature of the period around the 1905 Revolution. None of the Jewish female radicals in the works examined in this chapter are terrorists in the sense of carrying out targeted assassinations against political figures. However, the heroines of the two works on which this chapter focuses support and, in the case of Aizman's Dora, actively engage in violence, and are willing to meet a violent death for the sake of the radical cause. As will be demonstrated later in the chapter, it is this willingness, and even desire, to make the ultimate sacrifice that is the distinguishing mark of honour of the terrorist-martyr from the point of view of Underground Russia, rather than causing other people's deaths. Moreover, as Patyk points out, there is no evidence that the Russian literary prototype for the terrorist, Rakhmetov of Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'*? (1863), was actually a terrorist.<sup>9</sup>

Aizman's and An-skii's texts make for a telling contrast with regard to their positions vis-à-vis the mythology of Underground Russia. I argue that, while Aizman devotes much of his play to setting up his heroines as martyrs and therefore strives to secure a place in the Russocentric culture of Underground Russia for the Jewess, An-skii goes against the typical emphasis on women's need to show self-sacrifice through the loss of their lives. His novel explores the heroines' inner worlds in greater depth and finds value in qualities that also display self-sacrifice but that do not inevitably result in self-destruction, and even in qualities that are oriented towards more self-serving aims or that, in the case of the mother with radical sympathies, show unwillingness and unreadiness to engage in acts of martyrdom. As in previous chapters, before proceeding to the texts I shall give a detailed contextualization.

The myth of Underground Russia was fully established at the beginning of the twentieth century with the politicization and radicalization of the mass public, and reached its Golden Age during the 1905–07 Revolution.<sup>10</sup> This is the period in which the events of the texts examined in this chapter take place and during which the works were published; the writers seized the opportunity to say more in print than they had ever been allowed to before. The mythology created both by real-life examples of radical self-sacrifice and by literary versions was essential to the popularity of radical

<sup>9</sup> Lynn Ellen Patyk, 'The Double-Edged Sword of Word and Deed: Revolutionary Terrorism and Russian Literature Culture' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 2006), p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

groups among men and women. In this connection, Patyk traces a change in the public perception of the revolutionary in the late 1870s in terms of gender:

Whereas the image of the professional revolutionary as a self-willed superman along the lines of Chernyshevsky's Rakhmetov had dominated the public imagination from its inception in the mid-1860s, the prominence of women in the Great Political Trials, as well as Vera Zasulich's attempted assassination of Governor Trepon, generated a new, female image. This female image expressed the ideas of moral purity, compassion, self-sacrifice on behalf of the people, and Russianness in a way that her male counterpart could not, and was assimilated to and mediated by Russian culture's most venerated images of femininity: the Mother of God and Russian literature's positive heroines.<sup>11</sup>

Chernyshevskii's Rakhmetov came far closer to the ideal of absolute dedication to the cause, including eschewing sexual relations, than Vera Pavlovna, who pursued her own interests as well as those of other women and who did not see sensuality as detrimental to social goals. Kravchinskii and his followers perceived Underground Russia as the domain of absolute dedication to the cause to the point of losing sight of one's own interests – arguably the highest form of rational egoism. Writers inspired their readers to strive to emulate their heroes, real or invented.<sup>12</sup> Patyk formulates this phenomenon thus: 'Revolutionary terrorism was mimetic to the highest degree, and terrorists both self-consciously emulated literary or historical figures and possessed an acute consciousness that they, too, were providing a model for others to emulate.'<sup>13</sup> Chernyshevskii intended his 'new people' as 'types' to inspire and be imitated.<sup>14</sup> However, he also asserted that he based his characters on people whom he knew and who were not extraordinary, but 'merely' decent, people.<sup>15</sup> Kravchinskii, on the other hand, clearly wanted the public to view his subjects as extraordinary. Patyk formulates Kravchinskii's distinction between male and female terrorists in the following way:

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<sup>11</sup> Patyk, 'Double-Edged Sword', pp. 43–44.

<sup>12</sup> Mogil'ner, pp. 30–32. On the terrorist Vera Zasulich's attempt to model herself on Kravchinskii's heroes, see *ibid.*, pp. 43–45.

<sup>13</sup> Patyk, 'Double-Edged Sword', p. 282.

<sup>14</sup> Mogil'ner, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> N. G. Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat?*?, in Chernyshevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 16 vols (Moscow, 1939–1953), XI (1939), pp. 5–336 (p. 227).

If Kravchinsky has the archetypal male Terrorist appropriate the autocrat's will, and its corollaries of violence and power, then he claims for the female terrorist the saintly prince's kenosis (as the female analogue to the agonistic struggle) and sanctity. [...] Like the men, the women too are portrayed as 'types', yet Kravchinsky transmutes each type into its religious counterpart.<sup>16</sup>

A salient feature of this religious shading is the women's eschewing of romantic relationships. While radical culture enjoined on both males and females to value chastity, it was particularly stringent regarding women: 'The myth of the revolutionary martyr-heroine was, as Mogil'ner has emphasized, the myth of a pure and delicate young girl, a kind of secular Blessed Virgin (*bogoroditsa*)'.<sup>17</sup> Kravchinskii does offer examples of heroic sexual abstinence in men, but champions as another version of masculine radical heroism a Don Juan figure, an option unavailable to women wishing to embody ultimate female radicalism.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, maternity amplifies the pathos of the presentation of female terrorists, as in the case of the Jewess Gel'fman (see below).<sup>19</sup> The Christian and Russian veneration of the mother thus enters Underground Russia's mythology.

Just as terrorist acts against particularly villainous members of the establishment enjoyed popular approval at the beginning of the twentieth century, so the radical hero of literature was idealized by a broad section of Russian society.<sup>20</sup> The events of 1905–07, presumably partly because of the gross injustices committed by the state, brought 'Underground Russia' into the mainstream.<sup>21</sup> Within this context, the virulently revolutionary nature of *Ternovyi kust* appears less exceptional. Indeed, by the time of its appearance, the roles of literature and everyday reality in informing the general public about radical violence had almost reversed: radical violence had become so prevalent that the general public no longer found in literature their only insight into that sphere.<sup>22</sup>

Pressure on women to conform to ideals of femininity even in traditionally unfeminine spheres such as terrorism may have been partly responsible for their frequent losing sight of the political goals they were pursuing. The cult of martyrdom surrounding radical women may have made their lives even more expendable than those

<sup>16</sup> Patyk, 'Doubled-Edged Sword', pp. 125–26.

<sup>17</sup> Boniece, p. 594. The reference to Mogil'ner is from Mogil'ner, pp. 50–51.

<sup>18</sup> Patyk, 'Double-Edged Sword', p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>20</sup> Mogil'ner, pp. 57 and 60.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

of radical men, especially given that the less deadly realm of leadership roles was less accessible to them, and the pressure to conform to this cult may explain the frequent accusations of fanaticism against radical women.<sup>23</sup> Mogil'ner remarks that the mythology of the radical underground, in the creation of which literature played a major role, depicts both heroes and heroines sacrificing the right to love, create a family and have children, but that this is especially evident in images of female radicals.<sup>24</sup> In the mythology of the Russian radical underworld, women are to observe purity of body, as if in restitution for their transgression of the gender norm of passivity. It is as if the radical female body is to be preserved as a vessel for destruction (including, if necessary, of the body itself), but may not be reduced to being used for the lower, individualistic purpose of receiving and granting pleasure. We observed the same phenomenon in Chapter Two in Chirikov's *Evrei*. The radical Jewess chose the protection of her honour and that of her nation over her life: by preserving her purity even at the price of her destruction she protected her own dignity both for herself and for the greater good, in this case, that of the Jewish nation. Conformity to norms stipulating female chastity arguably represents a conservative step backwards in terms of the overthrow of prevailing social norms from the nihilists' advocacy of female provocativeness and promiscuity.<sup>25</sup>

Knight identifies a lack of aptitude for theoretical matters as a typical weakness of radical women, another phenomenon that one might relate to social conditions – the lack of educational opportunities available to women.<sup>26</sup> This may have placed further pressure on women to channel their rebellious energies towards those aspects of radicalism that demanded self-sacrifice rather than intellectual application. Despite the ostensible gender equality of radical Russia, the only realm of radical activity in which women could achieve near-equal status with men was probably terrorism.<sup>27</sup> Knight speculates that the isolation and frustration ensuing from the lack of opportunities for radical women to use their intelligence and learning may have been a factor in their

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<sup>23</sup> Jane McDermid and Anna Hillyar, *Midwives of the Revolution: Female Bolsheviks and Women Workers in 1917* (London, 1999), p. 55.

<sup>24</sup> Mogil'ner, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> On the popular conception of nihilist women as promiscuous, provocative, coarse and dirty, see Charles A. Moser, *Antinihilism in the Russian Novel of the 1860s* (The Hague, 1964), p. 44, and Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Evanston, IL, 1983), pp. 64–65.

<sup>26</sup> Amy Knight, 'Female Terrorists in the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party', *Russian Review*, 38 (1979), 139–59 (p. 143).

<sup>27</sup> Boniece, pp. 582–83.

joining revolutionary movements.<sup>28</sup> Since psychological factors such as intense commitment and capacity for self-sacrifice (qualities widely believed to be particularly developed in women) were at least as important as rational political motivations in attracting women towards such groups, the PSR (Socialist Revolutionary Party) was particularly attractive for those less concerned with ideological and programmatic nuances because of its focus on political activism.<sup>29</sup> Along with the anarchists, the PSR perpetrated most of the terrorism in the early twentieth century via its conspiratorial terrorist wing, the SR Combat Organization (*Boevaia organizatsiia*), such that 'by 1905, terror had indeed become an all-pervasive phenomenon, affecting every layer of society'.<sup>30</sup>

Jews, male and female, began joining radical movements in the 1870s.<sup>31</sup> Their proportions grew substantially over the next three decades: by 1900 almost 30% of arrestees for political crimes were Jewish, and in 1903 Jews composed an estimated half of the members of revolutionary groups.<sup>32</sup> Scholars have argued that oppression cannot solely account for the disproportionate numbers of Jews, since most Jewish radicals were assimilated into Russian society and enjoyed access to educational, economic and career opportunities. On the other hand, such opportunities remained limited and were periodically hindered by government measures; the resulting frustration combined with despair and anger at antisemitic violence to thrust Jews into the radical camp. It is possible also that Messianic idealism and a sense of belonging to a chosen people, nurtured by the particularities of a Jewish upbringing, may have conditioned Jews to be more responsive to radical ideology.<sup>33</sup>

The Introduction to this thesis outlined some aspects of the history of Jews' and Jewish women's participation in Russian radical movements and the Bund. I shall now cover selected aspects in more detail, starting with gender differences in radicalization within Jewish communities. Jewish communities considered their daughters' participation in radical movements more of a threat than their sons' because they consigned their women to such firmly domestic roles, whose ultimate manifestation was

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<sup>28</sup> Knight, pp. 144–45.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>30</sup> Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894–1917* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 4–5.

<sup>31</sup> Shepherd, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill*, p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 32–33.

motherhood,<sup>34</sup> which was widely considered one of the bedrocks of the transmission of a Jewish identity to children.<sup>35</sup> The decision to undertake revolutionary activity therefore severed Jewish women's ties with their families more completely than it did for men.<sup>36</sup> As we have already seen, some aspects of the social, educational and religious background and position of Jewish women facilitated their entry into non-Jewish society in ways that applied less strongly to Jewish men. Similar phenomena appear to explain gender differences in involvement in radical circles. Jewish women's adoption of the intellectual framework of radicalism did not usually require the discarding of religious teaching demanded of men since women tended not to have this knowledge in the first place, meaning that they were free of a significant ideological barrier to radicalization.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Geifman speculates that Jewish messianism made Jews particularly sympathetic to radical goals.<sup>38</sup> Given that the upbringing of Jewish males, with its strong religious component, would have placed greater emphasis on messianism than that of females, males may actually have been more receptive than females to some aspects of radical thought such as its eschatology. In any case, once committed to the radical cause and having disowned their background, Jewish women had less to lose ideologically than males. Indeed, the traditional Jewish family's restriction of the Jewish intellectual heritage to males made many women particularly eager to avail themselves of the educational opportunities offered by groups such as the Bund.<sup>39</sup> The weaker attachment to their nation of many Jewish women may explain why Jewish women joined the PSR in greater numbers than men.<sup>40</sup> The PSR had neo-Populist roots and therefore, although broadly internationalist, placed greater emphasis on the concerns of the Russian people than the Marxist groups with which Jewish males tended to side.

Jewish women's greater exposure to the non-Jewish world and to the world of work and its associated difficulties, compared with men's often insular experience, also

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<sup>34</sup> Paula E. Hyman, 'Two Models of Modernization: Jewish Women in the German and the Russian Empires', in *Jews and Gender: The Challenge to Hierarchy (Studies in Contemporary Jewry: An Annual: XVI)*, ed. by Jonathan Frankel (Oxford, 2000), pp. 39–53 (p. 53).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Knight, p. 146.

<sup>37</sup> Shepherd, pp. 5–6.

<sup>38</sup> Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>39</sup> Aleksandr Lokshin, 'The Bund in the Russian-Jewish Historical Landscape', in *Russia Under the Last Tsar*, pp. 57–72 (p. 63).

<sup>40</sup> On the history of PSR see the chapter, 'The Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries and Terror', in Geifman, *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, pp. 45–83, and Michael Melancon, 'Neo-Populism in Early Twentieth-Century Russia: The Socialist-Revolutionary Party from 1900 to 1917', in *Russia Under the Last Tsar*, pp. 73–90.

explains their greater worldliness and preparedness for revolutionary activity.<sup>41</sup> Even if Jewish men's background made them better equipped to engage in some aspects of the intellectual side of radicalism, their sisters' qualities may have made them more resilient and more suited to deal with practical matters and activism. Shepherd explains the particular seductiveness of radical movements for Jewish women and their consequently extraordinary application of their energies thus: 'the limitations accepted almost unquestionably for so long by Jewish women now intensified their motives for rebellion, just as their practical energies, approved by tradition, sought fresh outlets'.<sup>42</sup> The particularly dire working conditions of Jewish female workers must also go a long way to explaining their participation to a degree that cannot apply so convincingly to Jewish males. Within the world of work, there is also a significant comparison between Jewish and Russian women: while Jewish female workers protested against their plight in the workplace itself, Russian women workers rarely clamoured against their conditions.<sup>43</sup>

The rift with their families precipitated women of all nationalities into fierce commitment to the revolutionary cause, but one might presume that a Jewish woman's will and commitment would have been particularly strengthened by her experience.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, one might also expect Jewish women particularly to excel in the 'deep determination to maintain individual integrity and the highest ethical standards' that Knight ascribes to female revolutionaries.<sup>45</sup> However, the more pronounced break with their families and their community gave many Jewish female radicals an extra psychological burden.<sup>46</sup> We have already examined an example in literature, *Evrei*, of a Jewess apparently assimilated into a radical environment unexpectedly experiencing her Jewishness 'coming back to haunt her'. Statistics on matters such as party affiliation do not tell us anything about the deep psychological conflicts within the radicals. For example, we might know that a Jewess joined the PSR, ostensibly rejecting her family and community, but we may know nothing of, say, her later anguish at the decision and unexpected discovery of an attachment to her Jewishness. Yet the radical sphere did

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<sup>41</sup> Shepherd, pp. 5–6.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Rose L. Glickman, *Russian Factory Women: Workplace and Society, 1880–1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984), p. 156.

<sup>44</sup> Mogil'ner identifies Turgenev's paean to the Russian revolutionary woman, 'Porog' (1878), as giving literary form to the irreversibility of the radical's crossing the threshold between 'overground' and 'underground' Russia (Mogil'ner, p. 35). By portraying a woman, the poem draws attention to the particular problems that women faced as a result of their decision to enter radicalism, such as social disapproval.

<sup>45</sup> Knight, p. 142.

<sup>46</sup> Shepherd, p. 3.

offer a middle ground: while membership of groups like the PSR tended to necessitate estrangement from one's Jewish environment, the Bund placed Jewish nationality at the centre of its beliefs and co-ordinated its activities within the community. In some cases, this obviated the need to jettison the family and community, but did not preclude conflict with one's family, since anticlericalism, participation in political activity without parental guidance, and girls studying with young men offended traditional values.<sup>47</sup> Both of the texts examined in this chapter explore similar inter-generational conflicts, demonstrating how anger at injustice and the growing belief within the Jewish community that radical movements can fight it mend the rifts between fathers and sons and, especially, mothers and daughters.

### **Kravchinksii's Positive Jewish Revolutionaries**

Patyk finds that, 'despite the fact that many terrorists were Jewish, with few exceptions (such as, perhaps, Grigorii Gershuni), Jews were disqualified as heroic embodiments in the Russian cultural imagination'.<sup>48</sup> Nor was Underground Russia as receptive to Jewish women as one might expect. Although Russian radical mythology did allow a place for Jewish female martyrdom, it accorded the greatest distinction to ethnic Russian women, even when Jewish women performed equivalent acts of self-sacrifice.<sup>49</sup> Mogil'ner summarizes the history of the image of radical Jewesses in the culture of Underground Russia thus:

Среди героинь Подпольной России еврейские женщины занимали особое место, они же были популярной мишенью антиреволюционной и антисемитской пропаганды. [...] Нормативный образ революционерки-еврейки создавался в нелегальной мемуаристике и в беллетристике конца XIX–начала XX в. В него входили такие элементы, как жертвенность (часто – религиозность), боль за свой народ и, между прочим, яркая внешность, красота.<sup>50</sup>

However, Patyk explains the reasons why in Russian radical culture the terrorist par excellence was namely, first, Russian and, secondly, female:

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Patyk, 'Double-Edged Sword', p. 45.

<sup>49</sup> Boniece, p. 574.

<sup>50</sup> Mogil'ner, p. 85.

While statistically, the vast majority of revolutionary terrorists were male and a significant percentage was ethnically Jewish (or Polish or Armenian), the ultimate embodiment of heroic terrorism in the cultural imagination was, in fact, a *terroristka*, and needless to say, one who was sexually and ethnically pure – an archetypal ‘Russian girl’ as portrayed in Turgenev’s ‘Threshold’. [...] the female terrorist could best represent both the victim of government oppression and a self-sacrificial national avenger, motivated by indignation and love, rather than by self-will and hatred. Because her gender was an irrefutable visual sign that conveyed these meanings, the female terrorist lent herself to revolutionary terrorism as a visual medium. By the same token, as an agent and victim of violence, she enhanced the spectacular quality of the terrorist spectacle, in the process attracting the public’s fascination and the press’s interest. [...] the female assassin/terrorist became a vehicle of Romantic agitation, a means of arousing the male fantasy to indulge in scenarios of spiritual rescue (with the writer assuming the role of Pygmalion/Christ) and erotic martyrdom.<sup>51</sup>

As Patyk notes, Turgenev’s poem demonstrates the girl’s willingness to commit violence for the sake of the revolution.<sup>52</sup> Turgenev, though ambiguous in his presentation of the revolutionary, therefore contributed to the establishment of Russian ethnicity as a feature of the ultimate female radical martyr in the Empire.

Kravchinskii, however, was impressed by Jewish participation in radical movements, including in terrorist movements. Krotov finds that, in contrast to much Russian literature, Kravchinskii in his fictional and non-fictional writings portrayed Jews positively as devoted revolutionaries and, in some cases, terrorists, driven to a greater degree than other nationalities to bring justice and equality to the empire because of the greater persecution they face.<sup>53</sup> He concurs with writers like Vagner and Kryzhanovskaia in considering Jewish revolutionaries to possess great and perhaps ‘devilish’ determination and energy, but he attributes it to the urge not for domination over others, but for equality and co-operation.

Of women radicals in general Kravchinskii writes: ‘женщины, должно сознаться в этом, много-много богаче мужчин этим божественным даром. Вот почему им прежде всего обязано русское революционное движение своим почти религиозным пылом; вот почему, пока в нем останутся женщины, оно будет

<sup>51</sup> Patyk, ‘Double-Edged Sword’, p. 283.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>53</sup> Krotov, pp. 89–95.

непобедимым.<sup>54</sup> One would expect Kravchinskii to be particularly praising of Jewish women. Indeed, he believed that Gesia Gel'fman of *Narodnaia volia*, who was involved in Alexander II's assassination, captured the spirit of that party perhaps more than any other member:

Простая, глубоко симпатичная фигура Геси, быть может лучше характеризует описываемую мною партию, чем иные блестящие типы, поражающие силой, энергией и разнообразием деятельности. Так скромный полевой цветок часто дает более верное понятие о флоре местности, чем какое-нибудь удивительное и редкое растение.<sup>55</sup>

Kravchinskii writes that Gel'fman showed absolute devotion to socialism, but that there is something ordinary and unassuming in her heroism that, far from undermining it, strengthens it further. One of Kravchinskii's intentions is to contrast her with what he describes as her fanatical, Christian-hating family.<sup>56</sup> Since the writer describes Gel'fman as rejecting her family's attitude towards outsiders and having to bear her parents' curse upon leaving her family, one might interpret his portrayal of her as demonstrating young Jewish women's ability to overcome the 'Jewish' traits of fanaticism and hatred through the feminine characteristics of devotion and adaptability, in a similar way to Tamara Bendavid. He also shows Gel'fman as possessing characteristics that oppose those often attributed to Jewish women in negative depictions of them. For example, her attractiveness is deprived of threat by her modest character. Patyk goes so far as to argue that Gel'fman's 'surrender of her body is reified by the fact that she comes to embody the maternal principle, and is four months pregnant at the time of the regicide. The Jewish convert to socialism thus becomes the Madonna.<sup>57</sup> While Wagner's and Kryzhanovskaia's Jewesses dishonoured maternity through their use of their bodies, Kravchinskii's Jewess bears comparison with what many Christians would perceive as the ultimate mother.

Kravchinskii's description of Gel'fman counters the allegations discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis that radical girls, particularly those of Jewish extraction, were exploiting their sexual appeal in the name of the revolution, accusations that blacken the

<sup>54</sup> S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii, *Podpol'naia Rossiia*, in Stepniak-Kravchinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2 vols (Moscow, 1958), I, pp. 365–552 (p. 455).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

<sup>57</sup> Patyk, 'Double-Edged Sword', p. 126.

reputation of revolutionary activity even for potential sympathizers. It may be partly in order to avoid associating their revolutionary Jewesses with such behaviour that the writers discussed in this chapter kept their heroines away from association with sexual activity.

Perhaps what Kravchinskii is most concerned to do is to show that it may be namely the most reactionary, anti-revolutionary (Gel'fman's family is apparently even opposed to 'Christian' science), patriarchal environment that can produce the most devoted revolutionaries; that the Jewish family provides a prime example of such an environment; and that when femininity is combined with this Jewish background, the ultimate degree of devotion to socialism can arise. Kravchinskii uses antisemitic stereotypes and traditional conceptions of women to depict the great potential of Jewish female revolutionaries.

### **Background to the Writers and the Texts**

Like Iushkevich, Aizman wrote exclusively in Russian, publishing in both Russian-Jewish and Russian journals, as well as having his short story collections published in book form. However, neither of them was fully accepted into Russian literature as 'Russian' writers, and both were subject to antisemitic accusations that saw them as being part of the Jewish 'incursion' into Russian culture. On the other hand, the two writers wanted to work within and develop a Russian-Jewish literature, reflected in their concern with Jewish thematics (although both also wrote works bereft of Jewish themes) and their constant use of the Yiddish-influenced Russian of the Jews in the Pale of Settlement, a feature particularly prominent in Iushkevich's works.

Iushkevich and Aizman did enjoy patronage from an important personality in Russian literature of the time, Maksim Gor'kii, whose publishing concern, *Znanie*, provided an outlet for some of their works. Both writers dedicated works to Gor'kii and praised him as a source of inspiration. For example, Aizman claimed that without the influence of Gor'kii, to whom he dedicated the play, *Ternovyi kust* (1907) either would not have been written altogether, or would have ended up far weaker.<sup>58</sup> For his part, Gor'kii praised the work highly.<sup>59</sup> He could hardly have failed to be impressed by the fact that due to its openly revolutionary content, it was banned both from performance and from publication in the Empire, where it appeared only after the 1917 Revolution.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Iuzovskii, pp. 340–41.

<sup>59</sup> Levitina, ...*I evrei – moia krov'*, p. 103.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107–08. Aizman wrote *Ternovyi kust* in France, to where he had fled after witnessing the pogroms in Odessa. See *ibid.*, p. 103.

An-skii, on the other hand, as we shall see, developed independently of Gor'kii's sphere, although Gor'kii lauded him, too. Indeed, Gor'kii contrasted 'the amazing tension of the will to live' in another revolutionary novella by An-skii, *Pionery* (1905), with Iushkevich's 'incoherence' and Aizman's 'tear-soaked works', highlighting An-skii's unusual capacity to depict Jews as something other than martyrs.<sup>61</sup>

Critics have considered that in Gor'kii's works, with the possible exception of Vlasova in *Mat'*, female characters do not develop into as convincing revolutionaries as the male characters. Very few of Gor'kii's worker-revolutionaries are female, and those who are do not make for outstanding revolutionaries. Gor'kii's females sympathetic to the radical cause tend to be middle-class: Marsh finds that in Gor'kii's plays it is often women who 'supply the migratory characters, who attempt, but usually fail, to bridge the social divides they observe'.<sup>62</sup> She points out that women have the advantage in effecting a transition towards the lower classes' cause that they neither make money nor own property: they are therefore transitional themselves. However, this advantage is also a disadvantage, since they cannot be taken seriously in their revolt against the exploitative nature of their class, not possessing the financial or social independence to reject it.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, both gender and class limit some of Gor'kii's most radically minded heroines.

In stark contrast to most of Gor'kii's women, the female revolutionaries examined in this chapter are mainly working-class (none are from the intelligentsia, although one, Aizman's Dora, is the daughter of a tinsmith), and the heroines of Aizman's and An-skii's works, unlike those in Iushkevich's, become leaders of the revolution. They are crusading to bring down a regime that keeps them at the lowest social level in imperial society. The works show that revolutionary Jewish female working-class characters have the potential to inspire poor, downtrodden Jewish and non-Jewish women alike. A comparison with *Chto delat'*? is also telling: in Chernyshevskii's novel, as Glickman points out, it is a middle-class woman who takes the revolutionary initiative, and, moreover, with help from men of her class. Glickman notes that, although poor women in Chernyshevskii's novel do improve their lot, it is only through a woman from the middle social stratum.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> A. M. Gor'kii, *Pis'ma k K. P. Piatnitskomu* (Moscow, 1954), pp. 235, 236. Quoted in Gabriella Safran, 'Isaak Babel's El'ia Isaakovich as a New Jewish Type', *Slavic Review*, 61 (2002), 253–72 (p. 255).

<sup>62</sup> Cynthia Marsh, *Maxim Gorky: Russian Dramatist* (Bern, 2006), p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194–96.

<sup>64</sup> Glickman, p. 222.

Iushkevich and Aizman's alignment with Gor'kii, as well as their revolutionary topics, ensured that Soviet scholars examined their works, and they have also been the subject of studies on Russian-Jewish writing, most notably – from the point of view of the subject of this chapter – by Levitina.<sup>65</sup> Many Soviet scholars praised the works that Iushkevich and Aizman wrote around the time of the 1905 Revolution as in some respects reflecting the historical reality of the time, although they criticized, among other things, the accuracy of the representation of the proletarian revolutionaries and the extent to which they were depicted as motivated by ideologically sound principles and as engaging in meaningful radical activity.<sup>66</sup> Kastorskii laments that none of the *Znanie* writers produced a revolutionary to match Gor'kii's Nil of *Meshchane*.<sup>67</sup>

Gor'kii, who founded the venture as a platform for realist works oriented towards democracy and revolution, demanded that the works published in the *Znanie* anthologies did not conflict with his political ideals.<sup>68</sup> Both Iushkevich and Aizman drifted away from Gor'kii's influence. Indeed, subsequent to the publication of the works analysed in this chapter, Gor'kii broke off his co-operation with Iushkevich and Aizman because they did not toe the party line. Gor'kii and pre-revolutionary and Soviet Marxist critics found some of the two Jewish authors' works ideologically unsound.<sup>69</sup> Iuzovskii, sharing an opinion voiced by Lenin, asserts that *Znanie* writers such as Iushkevich and Aizman wavered between Marxism and liberalism, with the two camps fighting over them to claim them as their own and with Gor'kii occupying the front line of the former as their publisher.<sup>70</sup> Among the accusations that Iuzovskii in his chapter directs at the writers is a tendency towards naturalism and pessimism. Ultimately, Iuzovskii concludes, the writers' sin was their failure consistently to support the interests of and rally for a particular class – the proletariat.<sup>71</sup>

An-skii is the only one of the three writers to have become enshrined in the canon of world literature, for his play known in English as *The Dybbuk*. The play draws

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<sup>65</sup> On Aizman, see Levitina, ...*I evrei – moia krov*', pp. 98–123; on Iushkevich, see *ibid.*, pp. 124–95.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Aleksandr Dymshits, *Problemy i portrety* (Moscow, 1972), p. 170, and S. V. Kastorskii, 'Pisateli-znan'evtsy v epokhu pervoi russkoi revoliutsii', in *Revoliutsiia 1905 goda i russkaia literatura* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1956), ed. by V. A. Desnitskii and K. D. Muratova, pp. 64–111 (p. 67).

<sup>67</sup> Kastorskii, p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>69</sup> See Levitina's chapters on Aizman and Iushkevich. Iuzovskii discusses the ideological uncertainty of the *Znanie* writers as a whole in his chapter 'Gor'kii i dramaturgi-“znan’evtsy”: Chirikov, Iushkevich, Naidenov, Aizman', in Iuzovskii, pp. 317–53.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

on his scholarship on Jewish ethnography, while the focus of this chapter, his less well-known novella *V novom rusle*, reflects his political concerns. A committed Populist, he worked as Petr Lavrov's personal secretary in Paris from 1894 before returning to Russia in 1905.<sup>72</sup> Despite writing two songs for the Bund, An-skii never joined it, instead remaining in the internationalist PSR, which had Populist roots.<sup>73</sup> Another major aspect of his life was his collating of Jewish folklore. An-skii wrote *V novom rusle* in Russian, but soon produced a slightly different Yiddish version of it; both versions were published in 1907. The work portrays the activities of Jewish radicals in a town, N, in the north-west of Russia over a three-day period in June 1905. As the revolutionary fervour builds, various Jewish radical groups vie for the support of the youth. The heroine of the novel, the factory-worker Basia, is part of the triumvirate of the local organization of the Bund, the dominant party in the town; her thirteen-year-old sister, Mirl, is also involved in party activities. In the course of the work their mother, Ester (who herself may be seen as a heroine), goes from experiencing horror at their radical involvement to embracing the cause. Ideological differences within the radical community are forgotten at the end of the novella when the authorities turn on the various groups gathered in the city park, from which they attempt to expel them. The resulting protests unite radicals of all party affiliations, and include both Russians and Jews, young and old. The high spirits of the march may be doomed, however: the novel ends with Ester hearing shots, a matter of grave personal concern, since Mirl is at the front of the march.

The other main work studied in this chapter, Aizman's *Ternovyi kust* (1907), is set in a city in southern Russia and also concerns Jewish radicals during the revolutionary upsurge of summer 1905, focusing on a tinsmith's family. In the first act the 19-year-old radical son Manus leaves town to carry out a bomb attack. After learning of Manus's execution, his father, Samson, loses his mind. Although no other member of the family commits a terrorist act, Manus's 18-year-old sister, Dora, and 14-year-old brother, Len'chik, are radical combatants who support his deed. As in *V novom rusle*, one of the work's themes is the radicalization of a mother (Lea) through her children. At the end of the play, Dora is killed by soldiers during an armed uprising of workers and others bearing grievances against the regime. Enraged, Lea joins the fighting and dies together with Len'chik.

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<sup>72</sup> Shimon Markish, 'Russko-evreiskaia literatura: predmet, podkhody, otsenki', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 15 (1995), 217–50 (p. 236).

<sup>73</sup> Frankel, *Crisis*, p. 82.

Before moving on to examine Aizman and An-skii in greater depth, I shall start with a brief comparative analysis of Iushkevich in order to examine how the two writers' portrayal of the revolutionary Jewess differs from that of what was probably the best-known Russian-Jewish writer in the Empire and the most consistently controversial.

## 2. The Rebellion of the Capricious: Iushkevich's Revolutionary Jewesses

As Dymshits notes, Aizman and An-skii provide a more focused portrayal of the radical underground than we find in Iushkevich's works. Not only are the female revolutionaries in Aizman's work more active than in Iushkevich's works, the characters as a whole engage more actively in revolution.<sup>74</sup> Iushkevich only touches upon Aizman's and An-skii's major themes of violence and self-sacrifice, and none of his radical Jewish women approach those of the other two authors in terms of heroism and centrality to the plot.

Iushkevich's principal themes in his works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are the breakdown of traditional Jewish life among the bourgeoisie and the underclass and the accompanying social turmoil.<sup>75</sup> The first work to win him the attention of the Russian public was *Raspad* (1902), which tells of the disintegration of a petit bourgeois Jewish family through poverty and the decisions of the children, against Jewish tradition, to lead independent lives away from home. Iushkevich wrote short stories, novels and plays, and provoked controversy among Jews and Russians for his negative portrayals of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which appeared to confirm all the stereotypes of Jews as greedy and exploitative. While this pleased antisemites, many Jews condemned Iushkevich for fuelling further hostility towards Jews. However, Iushkevich's depictions of the lower classes are sympathetic and frequently sentimental, which allowed him to pass off his negative portrayals as reflecting the particularities of the Jewish bourgeoisie, rather than of Jews as a whole.

Reflecting the broad spectrum of classes from which Jewish radicals were drawn in real life,<sup>76</sup> Iushkevich's Jewish radicals have a range of social backgrounds. Probably his most successful character as a revolutionary, Aleksandr Grossman of *Korol'* (1906), comes from a bourgeois family. While his father is the villain of the play, exploiting the workers of his mill, Aleksandr leads the workers, who are in awe of him, in strikes for better conditions. The play ends with the workers burning down the mill and besieging the Grossman home; however, there is no clear victory for the workers, who are half-starved and on the edge of breakdown. Aleksandr's two sisters rebel against some of their family's and Jewish bourgeois society's values, but ultimately adopt other

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<sup>74</sup> Dymshits, p. 169.

<sup>75</sup> For detailed studies of his life and works, see the chapter 'Ia – strashnyi antisemit!', in Levitina, ...I evrei – moia krov', pp. 124–95; and Boris Czerny, 'Semen Yushkevich', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 317: Twentieth-Century Émigré Writers*, ed. Maria Rubins, (Farmington Hills, 2005), pp. 329–339.

<sup>76</sup> Frankel, *Crisis*, p. 75.

bourgeois values and are vain, capricious and materialistic, never seeing the radical light. Although one of them shows sympathy for the cause, she directs her hatred not at the tyranny of the bourgeoisie, but at her own nation. The play shows such antisemitism as ill-judged, since it explicitly demonstrates that the Jewish working masses are at least equal victims of exploitation as their Russian counterparts.

The revolutionary worker siblings of *Korol'*, Betia and Miron, constitute an example of Iushkevich's tendency in his works to present male radicals as more guided by reason, political consciousness and a calculating approach to revolutionary action than female ones, who are guided predominantly by emotions. Female revolutionaries tend to be destructive in their passion and dedication, and are better suited to embodying suffering than acting against the regime that perpetuates their situation. Unlike in the other works of Iushkevich's so-called revolutionary trilogy, *Golod* (1905) and *V gorode* (1906), in *Korol'* male revolutionaries do effectively achieve rebellion (albeit small-scale), making the play a better basis on which to compare Jewish female and male revolutionaries than the other two plays. The work leaves no doubt that of the two siblings Miron is the most respected and most successful revolutionary agitator, although he is second in importance to Aleksandr as a radical leader in the play as a whole: it is the bourgeois rebel and not the enraged worker who leads the strike action in the second half of the play. Betia appears more full of hate and rebelliousness than of revolutionary ideology and conviction and plans for action. For example, when the siblings' conservative mother Roza, who despite her family's destitution advocates acceptance of the status quo and fiercely opposes revolution, calls Betia a 'devil' and says that her daughter could kill a person, Betia exclaims: 'Пусть только меня пассердят, и я еще хуже сделаю. Со мной нельзя шутить... Ведь это сердце бьется... за правду, за справедливость!.. И горит в нем такая ненависть!..'<sup>77</sup> Although Betia is driven by the passion for justice, the play shows her to be driven largely by anger and hatred. Part of Betia's lack of success may be attributed to the lack of support of her female colleagues. Betia complains: 'Сегодня забастовали на чайной и на пробочном заводе. Хотела бы знать, когда уже начнется и у нас? Никогда не начнется. Разве наши девушки люди? Это скот. Кажется, я раньше поседею, чем наши сделаются сознательными.'<sup>78</sup> Betia reacts to her colleagues' lack of consciousness not with determination to enlighten and agitate them, but with desipal against the very people with whom she should feel solidarity. While Betia does display

<sup>77</sup> S. S. Iushkevich, *Korol'*, in *Sbornik tovarishchestva 'Znanie' za 1906 god, kniga chetyrnadtsataia (XIV)* (St Petersburg, 1906), pp. 217–320 (p. 256)

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

the commitment believed to characterize female revolutionaries, Iushkevich presents this quality as fanaticism (another widespread stereotype relating to female revolutionaries), since it manifests itself in hatred for what should be her comrades. Betia's frustration attests to the great suffering that Jewish female workers underwent, while her colleagues' lack of consciousness and her own lack of ideological or programmatic awareness suggest that Iushkevich is presenting a gulf between individual Jewish girls' enraged desire for revolution and their ability successfully to pursue it: their efforts are thwarted both by their own lack of education and by their peers' unpreparedness.

### 3. Emancipation versus Self-Sacrifice: Revolution on the Ruins of the Patriarchal System?

There is a tension in Russian radical culture between the pressures on women to conform to long-existing models of self-sacrifice (especially evident in the terrorist fringes) and the support for women's emancipation that the culture adopted as one of its principal concerns from its birth in the 1860s. Comparing Turgenev's Bazarov with his Elena Stakhova and Chernyshevskii's Vera Pavlovna, Freeborn concludes:

The image of man as perfectible through science, or capable of perfecting himself in order to improve society, was new and prophetic of future positive heroes in Russian literature, but was fundamentally less potent, it seems, than an image of womanhood emancipating itself from a subservient role and attaining freedom and independence. The true potency of the Quixotic ideal is revealed in Turgenev's fiction in Yelena of *On the Eve*, and it is the heroine of Chernyshevsky's novel who achieves the true fundamental change in her life.<sup>79</sup>

Freeborn attests to the centrality not only of female characters, but also of womanhood itself, to two of the master-texts of the Russian revolutionary novel, *Chto delat'*? and *Mat'*: 'The principal emphasis in Gorky's novel, as in Chernyshevsky's, falls on the image of womanhood remade through the discovery of a new revolutionary idea'.<sup>80</sup> The emphasis in this formulation of revolutionary womanhood falls on winning freedom. Consequently, such an approach tends to view revolution not in terms of the violence and the potentially freedom-curbing self-sacrifice needed to achieve it, but in the liberation of and transformation of the role of individual women in the buildup to revolution and in the transformed world that revolution is believed to create.

The female terrorists extolled by Kravchinskii and others as martyrs may have supplanted the model of Russian radical female emancipation, Vera Pavlovna, on the mythological pedestal. In Chernyshevskii's formulation, a woman can improve society and help wrest it from the clutches of patriarchy through self-emancipation and self-development; radicalism is compatible with self-actualization. For Kravchinskii, only self-renunciation can further the radical cause. The two writers offer a dichotomy: Chernyshevskii wants women to live their lives to the full, Kravchinskii advocates

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Freeborn, *The Russian Revolutionary Novel* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 244.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

death. The evidence shows that it was Kravchinskii's model that won radical minds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To be sure, Vera Pavlovna has almost unanimously been considered less truly revolutionary than Rakhmetov. The revolutionary idea that Freeborn recognizes her as embodying is more social than political, it pertains more to peaceful change than to the violent upheaval needed to effect real change and which Rakhmetov incarnates. Perhaps, then, there was always something lacking in Vera Pavlovna as a revolutionary even to such a staunch proponent of women's emancipation as Chernyshevskii. Vera Pavlovna's utopian dreams and her already implemented plans for co-operatives will achieve full realization only after the revolution; her characteristics, principles and achievements are less amenable to the demands of revolution than Rakhmetov's. One is led to believe that it is people like him who will force the rupture needed to make true Vera's visions and to ensure the security and greater prevalence of her schemes.

None of the texts examined in this chapter make the desire to escape from the patriarchal system and achieve equality with men the initial foundation of their heroines' radicalism, unlike the radical 'bible' of Chernyshevskii. Perhaps the closest analogue is Iushkevich's *V gorode*, where one has an extreme version of Chernyshevskii's plot, with the mother forcing her daughter into sexual relations with men, rather than making her marry someone unworthy of her (as in Chernyshevskii's work). While there is a man to direct her onto the radical path, Sonia has no man to save and liberate her, unlike Vera Pavlovna. Sonia invites pity and some admiration, but she does not encourage imitation.

Iushkevich's revolutionary trilogy portrays the breakdown of the Jewish family and of the patriarchal system on which it is based. However, there is no suggestion that this is a positive development, and that a fairer system will be constructed on its ruins. *Golod* and *V gorode* portray their central Jewish father figures as weak. In *Golod*, he dies on the streets after his wife, Nakhoma, throws him out of the house for turning to drink and hitting her. However, although Nakhoma proves stronger than her husband, she is not able to provide for her three children, and the play ends with her killing herself and them through carbon monoxide poisoning, partly because she sees no other way out and partly as a protest against the injustices of the society in which they live. In *V gorode* the father loses his job and the mother, Dina, forces one of her daughters, Sonia, into prostitution; the other daughter, Eva, refuses to capitulate, but is driven to suicide. The father takes a passive role throughout. So determined is Dina to ensure that

the family attain the maximum standard of living even in straitened circumstances that, when Sonia gives birth to a baby, she makes Sonia sell it.

Both of these plays present the perils of male weakness for the Jewish family, rather than advocating the emancipation of women. The weakening of bourgeois exploitativeness and erosion of traditional values does not attend women's usurping of male power in Iushkevich's revolutionary plays. In *V gorode*, patriarchal tyranny is simply replaced by matriarchal tyranny. Instead of emancipating her, Sonia's mother forces Sonia to become a victim of sexual exploitation. Although Sonia strives to live by the revolutionary Ber's values, at first by renouncing her profession and looking after her baby, she is only able to take this initial step for a while. On the other hand, nor is Ber a convincing revolutionary. Once rich with a wife and two children, he 'freed' his workers by giving them his workshop because he no longer wanted to exploit them, and is now a poor factory-worker.<sup>81</sup> He explicitly rejects Dina's philosophy that anything is permissible so long as it enhances one's life, and explains his sacrifice as motivated by his belief in the importance of human beings.<sup>82</sup> Ber's report that the workers are speaking 'strongly' and that 'something will happen', together with his conviction that within five to ten years everything will be beautiful, demonstrates the radical significance of his ideology.<sup>83</sup> However, as Iuzovskii points out, Ber fundamentally lacks a coherent ideology and does not actually do anything truly revolutionary, even ending up defeated by Dina's arguments. Indeed, assertions that the future will be beautiful without any concrete plans as to how this will happen appear naive in the atmosphere of poverty and suffering that the play evokes. Iuzovskii is therefore correct to argue that Dina, with her philosophy that everything is permitted in the fight for life, appears as the winner of the ideological argument, and that Ber is ultimately just a 'typical liberal chatterbox'.<sup>84</sup> All the same, as is typical for Iushkevich's revolutionary works, it is the male who directs the female onto the radical path. The male is portrayed as the wise teacher, the female as the naive but impassioned pupil.

Iushkevich in the trilogy presents Jewish female pretensions to independence as variously ill-judged, insincere and vain, while lauding their demands for heroic, ideologically sound men. In *Golod*, for example, Mira chooses between her two suitors

<sup>81</sup> S. S. Iushkevich, *V gorode*, in *Sbornik tovarishchestva 'Znanie' za 1906 god, kniga chetyrnadtsataia (XII)* (St Petersburg, 1906), pp. 49–196 (p. 149).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150–51.

<sup>84</sup> Iuzovskii, p. 334.

the ideologically correct one: the socialist factory worker Gabai, rather than the capitalist defender of the ‘bosses’ Simon. One’s impression is that Mira’s declared refusal to pledge herself to any man, even to Gabai, is the result of capriciousness rather than of desire for emancipation or of commitment to the cause. Although she tells Gabai that she does not belong to him, she also says that she loves him, and she even kisses him. Later, she declares:

Ни к чему меня нельзя приручить, — ни к мужу, ни к семье, ни к детям. В один день я все разорву и улечу. И туда полечу, и сюда полечу. (*Вдруг смеется*) Народ ворчит на улице! Если бы ему нужна была моя жизнь! Благословила бы их и поцеловала бы свою смерть!<sup>85</sup>

Mira does not strike one as the kind of woman extolled by Underground Russia for her unwavering dedication, of which the renunciation of erotic ties is a corollary. Rather, her actions and stated principles appear to be a result of her flightiness, her promise to kiss her own death for the sake of the people as much a whim as the kiss that she gave Gabai. Mira’s passion is presented as excessive and misguided. It is as if Mira is overcome by an overwhelming desire to sacrifice herself, despite the lack of a logical plan to utilize that self-sacrifice for revolutionary ends. She is impatient to do something extraordinary for the sake of it:

Мне хочется отдать свою жизнь. Мне это кажется прекрасным, необыкновенным. Необыкновенное хочу я сделать. Пусть все станут счастливы, а мне страдать вечно, — согласна! Всех освободить своей жертвой я согласна, но сейчас! Но чтобы не ждать, не томиться. Веди меня, укажи мне... (*Габай в отчаянии машет руками*) Ну, не сердись, может быть, я не понимаю.<sup>86</sup>

Mira may reflect the perceived extraordinary devotion of Jewish women to the revolutionary cause, but it is a devotion that lacks focus, and one wonders whether she really is prepared to suffer eternally in order to secure the happiness of others, or whether such claims are the result of ‘female’ whims. Gabai, in contrast, is aware of the need for planning, patience and the need to stir the masses rather than just sacrifice

<sup>85</sup> S. S. Iushkevich, *Golod*, in Iushkevich, *Rasskazy i p’esy: tom piatyi* (St Petersburg, 1908), pp. 1–111 (p. 81).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

one's life in order to show one's capacity to do so. The reader is left in no doubt that Mira indeed does not understand the workings of revolution, despite Gabai's attempts to impart knowledge of them to her.

Iushkevich's works show the peril of what scholarship in social history has shown to be Jewish (and Gentile) women's general lack of regard for ideology and planning, and the negative side of their emotional attitude towards revolutionary activity. An-skii's and Aizman's revolutionary Jewesses, on the other hand, are depicted as imitating and learning from males, but not as inferior to them, at least in the sphere of action if not in the sphere of revolutionary thought, where, in Aizman's work, they may be deemed somewhat lacking relative to their male counterparts. Most importantly, they are not only worthy of but demand imitation themselves by both male and female characters and readers. In Iushkevich's works, on the other hand, while some female radicals possessed enviable dedication, other aspects of their characters brought them down in the eyes of the reader, for example, Mira's naiveté and Betia's lack of solidarity with her colleagues.

#### 4. Aizman's Idolized and Emasculating Jewess

Krutikov writes that on the eve of the 1905 Revolution both Russian and Jewish writers for *Znanie* were 'searching for a new positive hero, a young rebel and leader, who could lead the masses in their revolutionary struggle against the despotic tsarist regime'.<sup>87</sup> Both Aizman and the non-*Znanie* writer An-skii put forward as their candidates for this position Jewish women. In *Ternovyi kust* there is, on the one hand, a kind of levelling of the revolutionary strengths of males and females. On the other hand, the ending of the play is so biased towards the tragic glory of female radicalism that one's final impression is of the superiority of the female in the revolutionary sphere.

Patyk characterizes Kravchinskii's male terrorist as "conceived in hatred" and defined entirely by his rebellion, by his agonistic and ongoing struggle with his unnamed rival [...] [He] has no desire to be one of the people, but quite the opposite, to be elevated above the crowd'.<sup>88</sup> In general in Russian radical culture, the male terrorist is driven by self-will and hatred.<sup>89</sup> This is not the case with An-skii's Manus, whose words as he prepares to go to his death are replete with indignation and, most prominently, love (for his family, especially for his mother) – the hallmarks of the female terrorist. Indeed, these qualities are predominant in all the radicals in the play, male and female. The play does not code such radicalism as feminine, however. The principal difference between the one female radical, Dora, and most of the various male radicals is the males' adoration of her, as well as their lesser certainty in their preparedness for violence (Manus is the exception). On the whole, the males, apart from Aleksandr (with whom Dora has a romantic relationship), prove themselves to be brave despite their doubts, but they continue to put Dora on a pedestal as the ultimate heroic radical. Aleksandr becomes convinced that he does not deserve Dora because she is so much bolder than he. During the uprising at the end of the play, he leaves her at the barricade when the barricade is taken, fearing for his own life. Just as she is dying, Dora comes to realize that Aleksandr is totally lacking the bravery that he had claimed, and for a while even believed, that he had. Another male in love with Dora, Berl, does stay by Dora, and himself is injured in the fighting because of his courage. Earlier, he, too, had self-effacingly extolled Dora's virtues:

<sup>87</sup> Mikhail Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity, 1905–1914* (Stanford, 2001), p. 72.

<sup>88</sup> Patyk, 'Double-Edged Sword', p. 125.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283.

Конечно, может быть, в ней есть достоинства, которых я и понять не могу, но, во всяком случае, для меня Дора – вот! (*Показывает рукой вверх.*) Выше всего!.. Выше всех!.. Манус – герой, святой человек, бог! Но Дора еще выше... [...] Да я недостоин мое сердце ей под ноги положить! Я недостоин умереть за нее!.. Кто я? Ничтожество!.. Мозг у меня деревянный, и я над серьезной книгой засыпаю...<sup>90</sup>

In the play, it is those commonly conceived as weak, such as the mother and the daughter figures (because they are women), the tender son, and the self-deprecating tinner's apprentice (Berl), who prove the bravest. Aleksandr, the well-dressed son of a rich man, may not possess the indignation and tenacity derived from suffering to make the grade; life may have been too easy for him.

Males admire Dora for her revolutionary commitment and for her ability to convince people to adopt her views. Moreover, when she is saying goodbye to Manus, knowing that he is going to his death, Dora demonstrates capacities for emotional control that exceed even Vera Pavlovna's. Predicting that Manus is going to be executed, she vows to him, and implicitly forces him to promise, that a 'request for clemency will not be signed' – neither by her and Manus, nor, she swears, by their mother.<sup>91</sup> Aizman thus subverts the usual paradigm of having female characters admire a male and thereby make him into a hero.

Dora proves herself a master of the usually male-dominated sphere of language and leadership. Unlike in Iushkevich's works, readers and audiences see not the female revolutionary being brought to consciousness through males' words, but her bringing others to consciousness through her own words. She not only inspires male characters and moves workers to sing (in this case, 5,000, according to Len'chik),<sup>92</sup> she goes further, prompting workers to participate in an armed uprising, which she helps organize and in which she herself participates.

Dora does, however, fulfil the traditional female role of nurse, wiping the blood off Berl's face after he has been attacked by Cossacks: 'Берл (*ослабел, говорит с трудом, на лице выражение блаженства*). Вот так вот... своими руками... Кровь мне вытирала... Взяла за лицо... Дора и вытирала...'<sup>93</sup> So much does Berl admire

<sup>90</sup> D. Ia. Aizman, *Ternovyi kust* (hereafter TK) (Berlin, 1907), pp. 55–56.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>92</sup> TK, p. 28.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

Dora that even her wiping blood from his face brings him into a state of ecstasy. Female sexual allure is therefore channelled and sublimated into a sister's role.

Act Three of *Ternovyi kust* contains a scene that portrays Dora as channelling all her sexual allure towards the cause. In it, Dora is about to smuggle weapons across town. She has dressed up splendidly in order to preempt the suspicion of the police and to conceal the weapons in her costume. Aizman uses Dora's dress to suggest her superiority to Aleksandr and explore ways in which Jewish femininity in general may be superior in the revolutionary struggle to Jewish masculinity. She presents herself to three of the principal male radicals (Aleksandr, Berl and Neiman):

*(Входит Дора, пышно разодетая.)*

Дора. Видите, какая я? Никогда они не заподозрят, что в моих корзинах оружие.

Нейман. Да, вид у вас... совсем не революционерки.

Дора *(смеется)*. Княжна?.. Александр, нравлюсь я тебе такой?  
*(Кокетливо изгибается.)*

Нейман. По-моему, вы на оперную примадонну похожи. *(Входит Берл и молча останавливается в дверях.)*

Дора. Ну, отправляюсь... До свидания... И не тревожьтесь. Через час буду назад. *(Идет, у двери, останавливается.)* А завтра... Ах, завтра!.. *(Смотрит вверх, широко раскрыв глаза.)* Какой день!.. Какое счастье!.. Александр, ты что скажешь?.. *(Смотрит на него пристальным, испытующим взглядом, в котором видна тайная тревога и печаль.)*

Александр. Мне кажется... все будет зависеть... от... от силы энтузиазма...

Дора. Мы победим! Я знаю это, я чувствую... И меня охватывает такой восторг, такая заливает меня бурная радость, что хочется... петь и безумствовать... Но нужно сдерживать себя. Необходимо в совершенстве владеть собой – каждым жестом своим, каждой мыслью... Вот так вот, крепко, надо взять в руки и стиснуть – молчи, сердце! Потом, после получишь волю!

Нейман. Полную волю!..

Дора. Ах, что за ликование идет!.. И если бы даже пришлось мне завтра погибнуть, – какое счастье, Александр, пасть на баррикаде, под красным знаменем, при грохоте товарищеских выстрелов и с криком

мщения... Александр, с криком мщения!..

Александр. Дора!

Дора. Иду. До свидания... Ступайте же, Нейман, в типографию.

(*Идем к двери.*)<sup>94</sup>

Neiman's remark, 'Да, вид у вас... совсем не революционерки', draws one's attention not only to Dora's disguise, but also to Aleksandr's pretence: while Dora is a dedicated revolutionary but is trying not to appear so, Aleksandr is not a dedicated revolutionary but wants to be one, and is forced into dissimulation. Dora's capacity cautiously and tactically to plan radical activity contrasts strongly with Iushkevich's presentation of radical Jewish women as too overcome by emotions and lacking in the capacity for reasoned thinking to engage in effective revolutionary activity without considerable male guidance. Dora shares the exuberance of Iushkevich's Jewesses, but is able to control and channel it appropriately. All the same, Dora's plans do not appear to go beyond the short-term, and she is hardly realistic in her expectations.

Hyman informs: 'The fact that women revolutionaries broke with the entrenched view of women as passive observers of political events contributed to the horror they inspired.'<sup>95</sup> Here Aleksandr is reduced to a passive observer, but there is an added irony in the fact that Dora puts him in this position through superficially adhering to her traditional passive feminine role of attracting the observation of others through her dress. She becomes, as Patyk would understand it, a 'spectacle'.<sup>96</sup> On the one hand, Dora's costume is a disguise, a function that Patyk identifies as one of the most important considerations in Russian radical women's choice of dress while embarking on terrorist missions.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, it is also chosen in accordance with another principle of terrorist female attire: it serves to emphasize femininity, which is significant for Patyk because 'the more apparent or produced the female gender is – in other words, the more feminine and sexually alluring – the more riveting the spectacle, the greater the viewer's *frisson*'.<sup>98</sup> Dora is voluptuously and splendidly overdressed, her femininity is overpronounced. By forcing the men to see her body not primarily as tantalizing but as a deadly weapon, Dora makes them abide by the injunction of Underground Russia

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 62–63.

<sup>95</sup> Hyman, 'Two Models of Modernization', p. 48.

<sup>96</sup> Lynn Patyk, 'Dressed to Kill and Die: Russian Revolutionary Terrorism, Gender, and Dress', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 58 (2010), 192–209 (p. 192). Patyk delineates various functions and connotations of female terrorists' dress.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

that men's admiration of radical heroines be free of erotic connotations.<sup>99</sup> Aizman conforms to the code of Underground Russia, having men put the female radical on a pedestal and allowing her to perform the roles of potential killer, nurse and model of self-sacrifice, but not letting her lose her chastity.

Ironically, by enhancing her femininity and sexual appeal, Dora makes Aleksandr feel not more but less masculine: this is not the femininity of the passive woman, the enhancement of which makes her appear more available to the male spectator and increases his perception of his own sexual prowess. Rather, it is the self-assured femininity of the 'princess' and combatant who has total control over her body and is at least unconsciously aware of the fear that it can instil in less self-assured men. By enhancing her femininity, Dora heightens Aleksandr's despair at his own lack of courage, a quality that society has taught him should be evident to a greater degree in men than in women. A deeply distressing irony resides in the fact that this body, seemingly dressed up for his possession, is so self-possessed that it is prepared not to submit to his desire, but to bring about destruction, including its own. Enhanced femininity spells greater courage and destructive potential – in other words, it signifies the possession in greater quantities of traits usually considered masculine.

Mosse's description of Scott's *Rebecca* fits Dora. Mosse is concerned to show that the Romantic period possessed heroines who, 'while remaining intensely feminine, were endowed with the so-called masculine qualities of willpower and courage'. He describes *Rebecca* as:

the most famous, intrepid in facing her enemies, defending herself with spirit and indomitable courage. Yet she is womanly in her beauty and chastity. More important, she is a Jewess, an exotic stranger, described as oriental – and therefore standing outside the confines of normative society.<sup>100</sup>

While Mosse claims that *Rebecca* did not threaten men's sense of masculinity because she is not bound by social conventions, one cannot say this of Dora and her ilk because, by embroiling them in the radical fray, the writers locate them within a society with definite social norms. Certainly, Aleksandr cannot salvage his wounded masculinity by rejecting Dora as an outsider. Dora trumps *Rebecca* – and also Chirikov's *Liia* – in another way: she transcends the culture of male domination that made *Rebecca* and *Liia*

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<sup>99</sup> Mogil'ner, p. 51.

<sup>100</sup> Mosse, p. 76.

victims of unwanted sexual advances. Dora is able to go beyond protecting her dignity to fighting for all the oppressed. Rather than merely repulsing a threat to herself, she stands up against the abuser of most of the society in which she finds herself. While Rebecca's beauty and dress at once demonstrated her nobility, good heart and dignity and exposed her to danger, Dora's apparel is the means to her exposure of both herself and others to the dangers of heroic action.

Through her dress, Dora variously enhances or artificially acquires qualities that Boniece identifies as the 'essential elements of the myth of female revolutionary martyrdom': youth, physical beauty and desirability, chastity, upper class-origins and courage.<sup>101</sup> Dora's coquettish parading of herself to Aleksandr in her garb and her suggestion that she looks like a princess, together with the comparison with an 'operatic prima donna', demonstrate that she has enhanced her social status in the eyes of the beholder. She has not only intensified her femininity and sexual appeal, but has overcome any Jewish ethnic markers. Dora obliterates or reverses all other markers of her group identification: she surmounts her class origins by appearing like a princess; she overcomes her Jewishness (Jewishness being incompatible in Russian eyes with such a noble station); and she disguises her status as revolutionary. This may suggest that, in pursuing surreptitiousness, the female Jewish revolutionary has an advantage over the male: by maximizing her gender markedness, she can minimize her ethnic markedness. Only disguising her class origins and the obvious markers of her revolutionary role would not be enough, since the tsarist authorities associated Jewishness with revolutionary intentions. Dora's case suggests that female gender may trump Jewish ethnicity, a possibility that concords with Patyk's reading of Kravchinskii's portrait of Sof'ia Perovskaia as 'intimat[ing] that femininity (in appearance and manner) is itself the ultimate disguise'.<sup>102</sup> By ridding his Jewess of marked 'Jewish' features, Aizman gives her a place within the ranks of the Empire's female radical martyrs. Paradoxically, Dora's dazzling femininity is a heightened manifestation of features typically attributed to Jewish women – the ability to transgress boundaries, whether gender, social, class, national or other. Dora represents an evolution for the radical Jewess as depicted in positive portrayals in Russian literature from Chirikov's Liia because, instead of her body and sexuality being reduced to the function of preserving her and others' dignity through submitting it to violence, Dora exploits her body and sexuality in order to deceive and do violence against others. The

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<sup>101</sup> Boniece, p. 589.

<sup>102</sup> Patyk, 'Dressed to Kill and Die', p. 200.

result is the same as with Liia (her death), but, unlike Chirikov's heroine, Aizman's is an equal participant in the violence. While in negative portrayals of radical Jewish women their sexual appeal is directed towards profligacy, thereby denigrating the radical cause, in Aizman's positive portrayal the Jewess's sexual appeal serves to glorify radicalism because it enhances the impression of her moral composure through highlighting her chastity.

Iuzovskii rightly asserts that in *Ternovyi kust* the idea of victory is subordinate to that of death.<sup>103</sup> Aizman contributes to the glorification of specifically female self-sacrifice and death. Dora's positive characteristics are directed towards her death, the inevitability of which one senses early in the play. Indeed, she is not only prepared to sacrifice her life, but appears to view a glorious death as a goal in itself. Dora to a far greater extent than Manus is depicted glorifying death in the name of revolution. Dora's desire to die distinguishes her from Manus, who is depicted as merely willing to die, not yearning for it, and doing so because he considers it his duty to the working people and the revolution.<sup>104</sup> Knight has found that many female terrorists desired their own deaths in order to expiate their acts by sacrificing their own lives.<sup>105</sup> Although some male terrorists suffered from the same qualms, 'women radicals seem to have been particularly vulnerable to the sacrificial component of terrorism'.<sup>106</sup> Mogil'ner finds that both in literature and in real life many terrorists focused not on the death of their targets, but on their own.<sup>107</sup> The radical underground mythology had difficulty accepting that their heroes and heroines through their actions would become not only victims, but also killers, a status difficult to bear for the terrorists themselves.<sup>108</sup> The urge for redemption is particularly strong in Dora, given that she has also urged her own brother to go to his death. The focus on Dora's obsession with self-sacrifice also deflects the audience's attention away from the fact that Dora is setting out to engage in violence against others, in keeping with the play's glorification of Dora; during the play we only see Dora committing martyrdom, we never actually see people dying at her hands.

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<sup>103</sup> Iuzovskii, p. 342.

<sup>104</sup> TK, p. 54.

<sup>105</sup> Knight, p. 151.

<sup>106</sup> Boniece, p. 582.

<sup>107</sup> Mogil'ner, p. 43.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

## 5. Heroism without Sainthood: An-skii's Basia

Both Iushkevich's and Aizman's plays reflect Knight's conclusion about women revolutionaries: 'The element of individual rebellion and the concentration on the self were especially marked among women. They often seemed unable to consider the revolution in anything but personal terms. Their intense emotional faith in the cause and their will to heroic martyrdom prevented them from analyzing their terrorist activities in terms of rational political objectives.'<sup>109</sup> An-skii's Basia in *V novom rusle*, on the other hand, is notable for her clearheadedness. Her actions are directed not towards death and glorious self-sacrifice for its own sake, but towards organization, promotion of the radical cause, and justice – not only as an ultimate goal for Russia, but at a more ordinary, less ostentations level within the party and within the workers' community. She works not towards martyrdom in the name of her nation, but towards the promotion and preservation of the culture and specific interests of the Jews. Since most of the goals with which we see her engaged are modest relative to those of the revolutionary women we have discussed, she lacks the self-glorification of which one might accuse the others. It is partly because of this and also partly because An-skii portrays Basia as a courageous, dedicated girl with faults that she is a more human heroine with whom one can more readily identify. In this connection, Frankel comments: 'An-sky paints [Basia] as often angry or resentful, no saint, but nonetheless genuinely heroic.'<sup>110</sup>

Basia is a far more complete character than Dora. Her combination of tenacity and level-headedness is apparent even in her appearance: 'В фигуре и походке девушки чувствовалась сила, самостоятельность. Видно было, что человек поработал на своем веку, не мало испытал, знает жизнь и умеет смотреть ей в глаза прямо и просто.'<sup>111</sup> While Dora's strength is directed almost exclusively to acts of extravagant (and perhaps futile) self-sacrifice, Basia's is directed towards a multitude of endeavours that each contribute either to improving the current lives of individual workers, or to the broader cause. An-skii's description of Basia contrasts with Aizman's description of Dora, which, although short, focuses on her physical appearance, including her beauty, and in which one sense fragility: 'Она брюнетка, худенькая, с красивыми чертами.'<sup>112</sup> Aizman makes the spectator view his heroine sexually, albeit

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<sup>109</sup> Knight, p. 157.

<sup>110</sup> Frankel, *Crisis*, p. 77.

<sup>111</sup> S. An-skii, *V novom rusle* (hereafter *VNR*), in *Novye veianiia: Pervyi evreiskii sbornik*, ed. by Shmi (Moscow, 1907), pp. 33–210 (p. 61).

<sup>112</sup> TK, p. 7.

through showing both her sexual attractiveness and her lack of sexual availability. An-skii, on the other hand, does not present his character in sexual terms, but rather emphasizes her independence, strength and ability to cope with life, a marked contrast to the typical representation of the Jewess as possessing physical features that seem to embody her suffering and vulnerability. Dora is not beautiful, and may even border on the unattractive, at least according to conventional standards: ‘невысокая, коренастая, с скуластым лицом, широковатым носом, низкой переносицей, резкими морщинами на лбу и густыми бровями’.<sup>113</sup> One senses that An-skii’s detailed exposition of Basia’s day-to-day life and the manner in which she engages in radical activity is intended to serve as a specific model for female revolutionaries, in the same way that Chernyshevskii intended Pavlovna’s organization of sewing co-operatives to inspire women to engage in analogous projects. Basia possesses none of the stereotypical beauty of the Jewess, a fact that helps An-skii resist any associations with the two most common attributes of the Jewess in Russian literature: sexual attractiveness and suffering. Nor does she conform to the rarer model of the ugly Jewess. The overall effect on the reader of An-skii’s description of her is the banishment of any thoughts of her appearance: her physical appearance is presented neither in terms of her attractiveness as a woman nor in terms of her ethnicity.

*V novom rusle* reflects the high proportions of Jewish women in radical movements, especially in the Bund. The preface to the Jewish anthology in which the work appeared cites a Russian Ministry of Justice statistic from 1906 that Jewesses comprised almost 46% of those put on trial for political activities.<sup>114</sup> In the novella itself there are references, for example, to arrests of Jewish girls apart from Basia<sup>115</sup> and to strikes by Jewish factory-workers,<sup>116</sup> the latter directly contrasting to Betia’s complaint in *Korol’* about the lack of rebellion among her work colleagues. Females are described as dominating numerically the ‘*birzha*’.<sup>117</sup> (The term ‘*birzha*’, from French ‘bourse’, referred to informal meeting places for radical groups, in this case the city park once enjoyed by the middle and upper classes that is now dominated and effectively controlled by the various parties, with the Bund enjoying the most power.) Jewish women are not only statistically prominent, they are also given prominent positions in radical activity, for example, carrying banners and making speeches. Like Aizman, An-

<sup>113</sup> *VNR*, p. 61.

<sup>114</sup> Shmi, ‘*Predislovie*’, in *Novye veianiia*, pp. iii–xviii (p. iv).

<sup>115</sup> *VNR*, p. 45.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

skii presents Jewish women as leaders.<sup>118</sup> Although none of the other women are as distinguished in their contribution as Basia, the fact that other women participate in similar activities shows that she is not an entirely exceptional woman.

The novel is ambiguous with regard to the relative value it gives to the opinions of the intelligentsia and those of the people, represented by Basia, among others. Both the intelligentsia and the people are shown to have valid opinions and goals. The work's ambiguity is therefore deliberate; Frankel goes so far as to call it 'polyphonic'.<sup>119</sup> The text also gives a voice to parties other than the Bund, such as Zionist groups and the PSR. Overall in *V novom rusle* An-skii gives a critical but admiring portrayal of the Bund.

Of the members of the triumvirate of the town's Bund, Basia is closest to the workers in terms of her occupation outside the Bund, attitude and beliefs. Her principal tasks within the Bund triumvirate reflect her close relationship to the people: she organizes and leads study-circles and mass meetings, and liaises between the party and the masses through circle representatives, for example, to pass on complaints about mistreatment at work; she is also the representative of a circle herself.<sup>120</sup> An-skii further sets Basia up as a heroine of the masses by stating that male and female workers admire and envy her, although it is clear that it is mainly, but not exclusively, females who do so. While female workers do criticize Basia at the end of the novella for being abrupt and distant, the narrator makes it clear that workers are more critical of the other triumvirate members, Dovid and Barkanov, than of Basia.<sup>121</sup> There is a sense in the novella that females involved in the organization of radical activities, whether Jewish or Russian, are closer to the unifying idea that the narrator asserts lies beneath the arguments and conflicts, and that their lesser interest in theoretical matters gives them a practicality lacking in many males in the same sphere. At the end it is young inarticulate workers, albeit males, who begin the protest that moves from the *birzha* onto the streets and during which participants knock policemen out of the way. This provokes the intercession of the Cossacks, but without such action any hopes of fighting back against the oppressiveness of the regime, let alone revolution, are futile. It is therefore the readiness for direct, spontaneous action of the people, not the loquaciousness and cautiousness of the intelligentsia, that proves most effective. Since the event is a

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>119</sup> Frankel, *Crisis*, p. 88.

<sup>120</sup> *VNR*, p. 93.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., pp. 187–88.

corollary of the people's will to which Basia is so close it also confirms the righteousness of Basia's stance.

Another key aspect of the novella is the foregrounding of female characters and female experience, with Basia and her mother Ester dominating the narrative point of view. On the one hand, in general males are presented as involved in more daring and significant radical activity than females. On the other hand, while prioritizing males as radical activists, *V novom rusle* gives relatively greater prominence to females, not least because the work is not concerned exclusively with radical activity as such. While one of the overall ideological orientations of the novella is towards the glorification of participants in radical activity as self-sacrificing heroes, it differs from many radical works of the period by not glorifying violence and death as such, therefore decreasing the importance given to these phenomena relative to works such as *Ternovyi kust*. One of its major themes is the reconciliation of the generations and the winning over of the older generation in the revolutionary wave, an aspect of the novel that a woman, Ester, embodies. She also represents an important emotional aspect of the revolutionary experience, that of the mother anxious for her radical children's safety while being proud of their activity. As stated above, Basia, for her part, embodies another important aspect of the work, the people's will. As we shall see, she also has other 'battles' to fight within the revolutionary sphere apart from the revolutionary one, and the narration attaches great significance to these problems. Consequently, this chapter argues that, although males may get the upper hand in one key aspect of the work, females do overall.

As an organizer and agitator Basia's engagement is direct and her importance within the organization should not be understated. On the other hand, Basia's role as mediator is typically feminine, and she is often thwarted in her plans and suggestions by the other (male) members of the triumvirate. Basia feels that, despite being a full member of the committee, she has little actual say in the decisions and is merely an 'executor of an external will'.<sup>122</sup> The novella demonstrates that this is not just her imagination.<sup>123</sup> Although she does lead to a limited extent, she is kept away from the key spheres of theory and ideas (for example, the composing of propaganda) and of

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, Basia's spoken agreement but private disagreement with Barkanov's and Dovid's assertion to the workers that the party cannot be run along fully democratic lines under current circumstances, which is prompted by workers' complaints that the committee members do not listen to them sufficiently (ibid., 190).

finance and fund-raising, for both of which Barkanov has responsibility.<sup>124</sup> The most difficult, complicated and dangerous work such as obtaining arms is also carried out by a male, Dovid.<sup>125</sup> Basia, on the other hand, stores weapons,<sup>126</sup> but does not obtain or use them herself.

An-skii does not provide an answer to the question of whether Basia's weaker position in the triumvirate results from her not belonging to the intelligentsia or from prejudice against her sex, but Basia is not shown to consider the second explanation. Angered at seeing the rich fellow member of the triumvirate Barkanov leaving a theatre and mingling with the bourgeoisie in a manner that shows his greater comfort with this class than among the proletariat, she muses on the actual relationship between the intelligentsia and the workers, and concludes that the intelligentsia's respect for and championing of the proletariat is false, and that they retain the negative features of the bourgeoisie and perceive a distance between themselves and the workers; it is because of this, she reasons, that the intelligentsia encounters so much opposition among the workers.<sup>127</sup> One must take into account Basia's mood when considering her conclusion, but An-skii through her is questioning the attitude of the intelligentsia to the workers. As Frankel argues, Basia's resentment is a result of the 'double difference of class and gender'.<sup>128</sup> The accumulation of obstacles against Basia relating to her sex, her class and her level of education renders her activity all the more impressive to the reader, while demonstrating that even among the most progressive Jewish radicals prejudices and the exploitation of privileges and inequality remain. Basia finds herself lacking the comradeship and emotional support that Boniece identifies as having been central to women's radical careers in Russia.<sup>129</sup> However, Basia does not let her resentment and her colleagues' inability to fulfil her needs interfere with her dedication to the work. Moreover, An-skii does not present such needs as resulting from womanly weakness. Rather, the true comradeship that Basia desires, one is led to believe, is essential to the humane, egalitarian and democratic running of the organization in accordance with the people's will that she represents. An-skii's Jewess thus comes to embody both the difficulties facing female radicals and the plight and will of the people.

It is male revolutionaries in the novella who determine most of the important events, and it is also they who are presented as in the midst of the most daring action.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>128</sup> Frankel, *Crisis*, p. 83.

<sup>129</sup> Boniece, p. 174.

An example of the dependence on males of key developments is the cancellation of a Bund meeting because Dovid, the party secretary, has not arrived in town as planned.<sup>130</sup> It is notable that the descriptions of Basia's achievements are frequently upstaged by the apparently greater achievements of male characters. For example, when Basia is about to set off from her house to give some books to a group of female workers whom she represents, a 25-year-old revolutionary male, Matvei, enters the room and the narrative immediately gives him the most attention.<sup>131</sup> Matvei, who has escaped from Siberian exile, is one of the most prominent Bund members. His very presence in the town is a danger to himself: he risks arrest, and therefore plans to spend only a couple of days in town, disguised as a dandy when in public. The detail in which An-skii describes Matvei's conspiratorial activity exceeds that given to the equivalent activities of Basia, and his actions exceed Basia's in bravery and cunning, for example, he once performed the heroic feat of escaping the police by jumping out of a window, taking illegal goods with him, and he is described as possessing unique qualities that his comrades admire.<sup>132</sup> While the reader is informed that Basia has been arrested numerous times, she largely avoids danger in the course of the novella, and it is male characters such as Matvei, Dovid and Mikhail who are shown subjecting themselves to the most danger.

On the other hand, Basia serves to enhance the nuanced perspective that the novel has on violence and other manifestations of radicalism that can be used to satisfy a desire ostentatiously to live up to a certain personal ideal rather than in order to achieve a common revolutionary goal. Through Basia An-skii reveals an enormously important advantage that the revolutionary Jewess has over her male counterpart: the lack of a narcissistic need to prove her toughness. In this connection, Safran asserts that *V novom rusle* shows An-skii 'reevaluating his attitude toward the place of Jews in the revolution and toward the ability of violent acts to communicate clearly'.<sup>133</sup> One can add that An-skii, like Aizman, uses the figure of the radical Jewess to criticize certain manifestations of Jewish masculinity. A childhood friend of Basia's, Sender, who about a year and a half previously switched allegiance from the Bund to the SRs, is convinced that Jews, including himself, are indecisive, weak and pitiful compared to Russians. Russians, on the other hand, are direct, strong and healthy.<sup>134</sup> He states that the only time he has experienced happiness and calm is when he held a bomb and imagined the

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<sup>130</sup> *VNR*, p. 62.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>133</sup> Gabriella Safran, *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk's Creator*, S. An-sky (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2010), p. 135.

<sup>134</sup> *VNR*, p. 172.

power that its destructive potential gave him.<sup>135</sup> Sender's urge to experience true masculinity, embodied for him by the Russian male and obtainable by holding an instrument of mass death, overshadowed any urge to serve the cause and indeed threatened the cause. Unusually in Russian literature, the femininity of An-skii's Jewesses proves relatively unproblematic: it provokes no neuroses, let alone the victimhood with which it so often assails Jewish women in Russian literature. Nor is there any sense, as in Iushkevich's works and in Aizman's, that femininity creates excessive revolutionary passion that might prove more self-destructive than destructive of the status quo or creative of a new order. In An-skii's novella, it is masculinity that in some cases is out of control and that can make the revolutionary male Jew err from the path. The myth of Jewish male cowardice has penetrated deep into the Jewish male psyche and diminished his revolutionary potential in a way that does not affect females.

Basia, who shares Sender's despisal of all that is pitiful and weak, sees through his pretension to strength, maintaining that genuinely strong people are strong without bombs and never claim to be strong; professing a desire to be strong is the ultimate proof of one's weakness and uselessness.<sup>136</sup> Basia champions the strength of resistance and endurance, and of conducting radical activity in such a way that one risks being killed, while resisting the urge to commit terrorist acts.<sup>137</sup> Although Sender rejects such an attitude because he perceives it as Jewish, Basia is more convincing than Sender because her arguments lack the self-centredness of Sender's, and because Basia's approach to violence has nothing in common with the stereotype of Jews passively accepting suffering, for example, as a punishment from God. It is Sender's attitude that is closer to that of stereotypical Jews, and Basia even goes so far as to compare the yearning for strength with 'whining women's prayers'.<sup>138</sup> What Basia champions is a quiet, dignified strength that is greater than the boorish, boastful 'strength' of, say, the terrorist or the Russian pogromists. Their apparent strength ultimately betrays weakness, since they are strong only through external power, for example, weapons.

By having Basia win the argument about violence, An-skii adds weight to her arguments for the Bund's national stance, against Sender's claim that the party is not powerful enough in isolation and needs to be subsumed into an Empire-wide party like the PSR.<sup>139</sup> An-skii therefore has his female revolutionary not only embody the will of

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., pp. 173–74.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

the masses, but also defend her party's stance of not joining one of the empire-wide multi-national parties but rather to preserve its national independence. Although An-skii could have other members of the Bund articulate a defence of the party's national position, An-skii chooses to have his heroine do so, thereby uniting in the reader's eyes her status as a representative of the masses and of the Jewish people as a whole.

Although An-skii's Jewess serves to reject a particular male attitude towards violence, the attitude that she professes is directly realized in the novella in a masculine context by men. The work is therefore critical not of male attitudes towards violence in general, but of a particular type of attitude, and it presents heroic violence as predominantly a male sphere. While Basia endorses this approach to violence, neither she nor other women are portrayed prominently in situations that embody it. An event referred to in the novel that does exemplify this attitude is the guarding of scrolls in synagogues and prayer houses from pogromists during the 1903 pogrom in Gomel' by the younger generation, despite their supposed indifference to matters of tradition and religion.<sup>140</sup> So constructive, rather than merely destructive, was the violence that it mended the rift between the generations. Even the context of the narration of this event is masculine: the story is narrated to Matvei by his pious father, a dying Torah scribe (the mother is present but silent during the telling of the story, and later leaves when she realizes that her presence is unwanted).<sup>141</sup> The participants in the defence are implicitly male, and Matvei's father blesses Matvei because he knows that he, too, would sacrifice his life in a similar situation. No such 'sanctifying' of self-sacrificing violence takes place between mothers (or fathers) and daughters in the novella. Another key event in the work, the forceful taking over a synagogue by radical workers so that they can preach their message of solidarity to traditional Jews (a feat in which they are successful despite the initial hostility of the pious Jews), is led by men and no women are mentioned as taking part.<sup>142</sup>

An-skii justifies the Jewish national approach to radicalism in other ways, too. The danger of the outbreak of a pogrom looms over the whole novella. The work does not present religious Jews as xenophobic fanatics, but rather as dignified and pious. The radical generation therefore defends this dignity and ensures Jewish survival, rather than pursuing narrow nationalist goals. Frankel comments that the work shows that 'despite the chasm dividing the outlook of the traditionalists from that of the rebels, both sides in

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp. 87–88.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., pp. 87–88. On the theme of pogroms and inter-generational conflict in *V novom rusle*, see also Hetényi, "Three Serpents with Tongues and Eyes of Flame", pp. 286–87.

<sup>142</sup> *VNR*, pp. 181–86.

fact recognized that they were bound together by a common fate'.<sup>143</sup> An-skii is careful to show the breadth of Jewish identity: it embraces everything from the pious Jew to the atheist radical. Through such a presentation of Jewish identity, An-skii avoids the typical choice presented by Russian and Russian-Jewish literature, of either the fanatical or almost fanatical clinging to Jewish identity or the rejection or ignoring of it. It is precisely radical activity, typically associated with rigid atheism, that ensures the preservation of such a range of identities.

A degree of equality between the sexes in the sphere of direct radical activity is achieved at the end of the novel, when the radicals begin a march against the authorities' closure of the *birzha* and policemen's rough handling of some of those who attempt to enter it. Basia is absent, but her sister, Mirl, stands at the front of the procession along with the young male leader, both carrying banners.<sup>144</sup> Although it is started by workers, Russians, members of the intelligentsia, men and women, young and old, join in. The final vision of the novella is therefore of all the oppressed united against the oppressors, undivided by gender, class or nation. The ending embodies Basia's view that the Jewish proletariat's campaign for their rights and the protection of their identity and traditions fits seamlessly into the general, Empire-wide revolutionary wave. Demands for the right to a small space, whether in the form of the *birzha* or, more abstractly, national autonomy, can feed into the campaign of all the oppressed and drive them all into revolt. While the young Jewish radicals in Gomel' had created Jewish national unity by defending the community against the pogromists, at the end of the novel the instance of police violence incites a much broader response, and unity is accomplished among a greater range of groups from the Empire, including not only young and old but also Jews and Russians. All are united by a single enemy, the state itself, and by a common goal, its destruction. What proves all-reconciling in the novella is not narrowly national or familial: it is the shared desire for dignity and justice. Cultural and even religious differences dividing groups can cease to be exclusionary when the various groups share this concern.

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<sup>143</sup> Frankel, *Crisis*, p. 79.

<sup>144</sup> *VNR*, p. 199.

## 6. Jewish Motherhood and Revolution

Freeborn points out that the association between motherhood and revolution provides a solution to the problem of generational conflict identified by Turgenev in *Ottsy i deti* because it offers ‘an essentially unifying notion of the mother as the spirit of revolutionary socialism engaged in ensuring a future of truth and amity for the children’.<sup>145</sup> The mothers in both Aizman’s and An-skii’s works initially disapprove of their children’s radical activity, but later adopt their views, seeing in them a just solution to the evils of the contemporary world and the only path to a better future for their children and for humanity as a whole.

When she first hears about Basia’s involvement in radical activity, Ester experiences despair and ‘maternal horror’ and begs her daughter to stop, threatening her with punishment both earthly and divine.<sup>146</sup> However, she later begins ‘gradually to reconcile herself with her daughter’s behaviour’, and then even to be proud of Basia’s involvement in the Bund, accepting even her 13-year-old daughter Mirl’s participation.<sup>147</sup> Finally, she herself begins to read Basia’s radical books and comes to believe in their ideas,<sup>148</sup> expressing solidarity with the complaints of workers and even (half-jokingly) suggesting that she might join the Bund herself.<sup>149</sup>

One of the ways that An-skii shows commitment to radicalism as compatible with a Jewish identity is through Ester. She changes from a traditional Jewish mother striving to inculcate a Jewish identity in her children by making them adhere to traditions, to one convinced that Jewish identity can be preserved and enhanced not only through traditions, but also through activities and values that appear to run counter to them. Ester is successful as a Jewish mother, instilling in her children solidarity with their nation, as well as accomplishing such practical tasks as making sure that they are fed; she shows great dedication and strength by working in old age. However, she is not like Aizman’s Lea: while approving of her daughters’ activity, she does not appear to possess enough physical strength or, perhaps, courage to engage in it herself. In An-skii’s novella, the generational gap is overcome, but it remains for the younger generation to lead the way to a better future. Despite the scenes of generational reconciliation in the novella, An-skii leaves no doubt that only the younger generation is

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<sup>145</sup> Freeborn, p. 52.

<sup>146</sup> *VNR*, p. 50.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

able to pit itself against the modern world of destructive violence at the hands both of representatives of the regime and of Russian chauvinism. The representatives of the older generation, including Ester, are presented as old, sickly and dying. Hetényi remarks that ‘An-sky juxtaposes action and writing, as the slow, steady transcribing of sacred texts is contrasted with sudden, heroic death’.<sup>150</sup> A similar analysis can also apply to the contrast between Ester and her daughters: Ester is not concerned with words, but her traditional Jewish occupation of selling beans, with its connotations of barely surviving and eking out an existence, contrasts with her daughters’ striving to transcend bare survival and with their revolutionary fight against injustice. The older generation has much to preserve, but only the younger generation can preserve it. Moreover, the younger generation, unlike the older, can also create new greatness.

Such a gulf does not exist between Aizman’s Lea or the classic revolutionary mother of Russian literature, Vlasova of Gor’kii’s *Mat’*, and their revolutionary children. Freeborn makes the following conclusion about Vlasova: ‘through discovering at first hand the perils and sacrifice of a revolutionary vocation, the mother becomes consciously committed to political activism in the name of revolution’.<sup>151</sup> He contends that Gor’kii depicts Vlasova as ‘the mother of all revolutionaries’.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, he finds in Gor’kii’s novel evidence that unique revolutionary potency reposes not only in ‘womanhood emancipating itself’ (as exemplified by Chernyshevskii and as discussed earlier in this chapter), but also in the image of motherhood. For Freeborn, Gor’kii’s creation of the myth identifying the mother with revolution is equal in potency to Chernyshevskii’s creation of the myth of the ideal of emancipated womanhood. Freeborn explains that ‘in the Russian novel [motherhood] is an image signalling change, renewal and revolutionary transformation’.<sup>153</sup> With regard to Vlasova, he elaborates: ‘Gorky’s revolutionary image of motherhood presupposes the birth of a new political era, the salvation of the working class and a resurrecting force of life.’<sup>154</sup>

Mogil’ner also singles out the mother as a key figure in the radical Russian literature of the 1905–07 revolutionary period:

Оказалось, у Героя есть мать – не отец, не жена, не дети, только мать.  
Матери героев благословляли их выбор и призывали общество к тому же.

<sup>150</sup> Hetényi, “‘Three Serpents with Tongues and Eyes of Flame’”, pp. 285–96 (p. 286).

<sup>151</sup> Freeborn, p. 49.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>154</sup> Freeborn, p. 63.

Голоса матерей звучали в унисон с литературными голосами героических сыновей и дочерей, их взаимоотношения мифологизировались. У этих взаимоотношений не было истории, матери возникали в последней, экзистенциальной точке жизни детей-героев, – перед казнью или другим, менее суровым судебным приговором. Появление Матери – образа, воплощавшего преемственность, способность давать жизнь, – было попыткой интеграции в общество через традицию. Мать революционера, подобно Богоматери, благославляла жертву (смерть) своего ребенка.<sup>155</sup>

The relationship between the mother and her revolutionary son is central to both *Mat'* and *Ternovyi kust*. It is sadness and indignation at her son Manus's death that prompts Lea's radicalization. However, Lea's maternal love also inspires and gives strength to Manus in the fulfilment of his radical tasks. Aizman emphasizes Manus's overwhelming love for his mother and Manus even describes Lea as having a 'martyr's face' that urges him on more forcefully than anything else: 'На тебя смотрю, мама, на мученическое лицо твое, – громче, чем все, отчетливее, чем все, постоянно, и властно твердит оно: "Манус, иди!"'<sup>156</sup> It is as if his mother's love and capacity for suffering is giving him the courage to carry out his heroic act, while simultaneously making leaving her seem unbearable.

Aizman's Lea goes further in her contribution to radical activity than even Vlasova, of whom she represents a more tragic version, leading Levitina to conclude: 'Леа – героиня трагическая. В русской драматургии подобных ей нет.'<sup>157</sup> While the Christianocentric culture of Underground Russia drew a parallel between the mourning of the Virgin Mary for her child and that of mothers in the Russian Empire for their children when they died for the radical cause,<sup>158</sup> Aizman can be considered to use an Old Testament matriarch, Rachel, as the maternal prototype for Lea with her inconsolable mourning. Dresner finds that the most common theme relating to Rachel in world literature is her lamenting her lost children (that is, the exiles) in Jeremiah 31.15.<sup>159</sup> Even if one assumes that it is only this Old Testament prototype that Aizman had in mind, it would also have associations for non-Jewish Russians, given that the Christian tradition also appropriates Old Testament figures and especially that Rachel is

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<sup>155</sup> Mogil'ner, p. 63.

<sup>156</sup> TK, p. 22.

<sup>157</sup> Levitina, ...*I evrei – moia krov'*, p. 105. See also Amfiteatrov's similar judgement: Aleksandr Amfiteatrov, *Sovremenniki* (Moscow, 1908), p. 190.

<sup>158</sup> See Patyk, 'Double-Edged Sword', pp. 130–31.

<sup>159</sup> Samuel H. Dresner, *Rachel* (Minneapolis, 1994), p. 153.

considered to prefigure Mary. Mary's identification with Rachel partly stems from the reference in Matthew 2:18 to the passage in Jeremiah concerning Rachel weeping for her children; given that the context is the Massacre of the Innocents, Rachel is readily associated with the woman whose son is the target of Herod's campaign, and who will also later mourn the loss of her child.<sup>160</sup> Consequently, Aizman's Old Testament prototype can easily be assimilated into the Christianocentric culture of Underground Russia, regardless of whether this was his intention.

In her courage and independence in battle for the sake of her people, however, Lea resembles Judith. While her husband goes mad (leaving her effectively a widow, like Judith), Lea heroically furthers the work of her children after their deaths. The deaths of one's revolutionary children, she declares, should prompt one, first, to avenge their murderers and, second, to want to participate in the battle oneself:

*(Оторвавшись от тела дочери, выпрямляется, и с лицом безумной, потрясая над головой кулаками, кричит в неистовстве. В звуках ее голоса ярость раненого барса и пламенная сила пророка, ведущего народ.) Вот ваш завтрашний день!.. Вот что ждет вас всех!.. Украсьте же себя кровью убитых детей наших! Украсьте себя смертью их, – и замучим мучителя!*<sup>161</sup>

Through Lea, Aizman shows motherhood to be the most potent force in the revolutionary arsenal, for no motivation for violent and successful revolution can be stronger than a mother's outrage at the murder of her children. Indeed, in this sense, motherhood, or grieving motherhood, becomes a stronger reason for revolution than the need to rise up against oppression per se. Aizman therefore goes further than Gor'kii or Iushkevich in uniting motherhood and revolution. Lea exceeds the achievement of the typical mother of radical literature of the period, who glorified her son's or daughter's martyrdom and called on society to follow it: Lea attempts to engage in combat herself, turning a revolver on some soldiers. Although unsuccessful from the pragmatic point of view (she and her younger son, Len'chik, are set upon by the soldiers), she not only attains the status of martyr, as Underground Russia demands, but is also explicitly described as fulfilling the role of prophet to the Jewish people that she had adopted after her son's death, establishing the usurpation of this role from Jewish males to Jewish females.

<sup>160</sup> Fred Strickert, *Rachel Weeping: Jews, Christians, and Muslims at the Fortress Tomb* (Collegeville, 2007), p. 35.

<sup>161</sup> TK, p. 78.

For Vlasova, the unity of all accomplished by revolution must involve birth, and therefore motherhood. The association with birth inevitably gives rise to connotations with death, a pair that Freeborn invokes in the title of the conclusion to his study, ‘The Death-Birth of a World’.<sup>162</sup> He explains: ‘In the Russian literary response to revolution an imagery of death and birth is paramount and the death-birth concept becomes itself a transfiguring ideal.’<sup>163</sup> He later elaborates: ‘the birth of the new must be dependent on the death of the old’.<sup>164</sup> Lea’s prediction of her children’s fate at the beginning of the play casts a tragic shadow over their deaths, and she therefore contributes to the play’s depiction of them as tragic revolutionary heroes. Lea becomes a tragic hero like her children, imbuing their heroic deaths with even greater significance through her own suffering.<sup>165</sup> Through her instinctive understanding of her children’s behaviour and destiny, Lea appears to understand the revolutionary forces in society as a whole; one might interpret her premonition of her children’s deaths as attesting to her ability to foresee the inevitable violence of the revolutionary upheaval, in accordance with Aizman’s portrayal of her as a prophet.

On the other hand, Lea, rather than a death-birth figure, is ultimately one who replaces birth-giving with death. Lea speaks far more of avenging oppression and violence through violence than of the future they are trying to build. At least Dora, for all her tendency towards death, emphasizes the future glory of the transformed world; Lea speaks only of sorrow and vengeance. Indeed, Lea’s final words are pessimistic and bloodthirsty rather than optimistic and hopeful: before calling on people to cover themselves with the blood of their children and torture the torturer, she concludes that ‘everything’s over’.<sup>166</sup> Dora asserts both the wonderful potential of life and the glory of death. However, the two female revolutionaries, especially Lea at the end of the play, shift the emphasis from the former philosophy to the latter. Moreover, as Iuzovskii argues, from the beginning the play creates (especially through Lea) a sense of inevitable tragedy, as if the revolutionary battle were destined to end in the defeat of the radicals.<sup>167</sup> Such a play cannot give hope that eventually the revolutionary forces will prevail, since it suggests that destiny, rather than human will and the righteousness of

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<sup>162</sup> Freeborn, ‘Conclusion: The Death-Birth of a World’, in Freeborn, pp. 239–58.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>165</sup> While there are definite similarities between Lea and Gor’kii’s Vlasova, Levitina rejects the possibility of the influence of Gor’kii’s novel on Aizman’s play because *Mat’* was written later. Levitina, ...*I evrei – moia krov’*, p. 296.

<sup>166</sup> TK, p. 78.

<sup>167</sup> Iuzovskii, p. 342.

the heroes and of revolution, dictates the future. Instead of the inevitability of the victory of the proletariats promised by Marxism, Aizman's play indicates the inevitability of death and suffering – at least for Jews. Given Aizman's knowledge of the ultimate failure of the events of 1905 and subsequent outbreak of pogroms with which the play is concerned, such a reading seems even more convincing.

In Act Two, Lea laments the suffering of her people and the Jews' loss of their children in prayers that recall the jeremiads of the prophets or the weeping of Rachel:

*(Опустив руки книзу и обратив лицо к потолку, Леа говорит вслух, тягучим напевом, как бы продолжая и дополняя сейчас оконченную молитву). Господи всемогущий! Господи великий! [...] Чистых сердцем, светлые души, ангелов святых, Ты казнишь. За что? (Пауза.) И весь народ казнишь. За что же караешь его гневом безбрежным?.. Мало ли страдал он? Жестоко страдал он, века страдал и тысячелетия... [...] Оскверняли могилы его, и храмы его, и твою, господи, святую тору. Резали животы беременным матерям, младенцам черепа раздробляли, и невинной кровью их обильно обагрились ноги мучителя. [...] Но стоны наши к тебе не дошли, о господи, не дошли стоны к месту обитания твоего, боже! И вот дети наши поднялись, и встали дети на защиту народа. На защиту твою, о господи, на защиту святой правды твоей, на защиту великих заповедей твоих. И детей наших казнят. Услыши меня, могучий! Услыши меня, всесильный!<sup>168</sup>*

On the one hand, by referring to pogrom violence, Lea emphasizes the suffering of Jews in particular. On the other hand, phrases such as 'И детей наших казнят' can be applied to families of every ethnicity in the Empire. Moreover, elsewhere in the play Lea explicitly locates her nation's sufferings within the general Russian context, and Aizman has her view Jews as having suffered alongside Russians. In a conversation in Act Three she gives the following assessment of war, which could come from the lips of a Russian:

Это первая война, когда люди воюют за себя... Помню я русско-турецкую войну: сколько народу легло!.. Теперь в Маньчжурии... Зачем?.. Брата моего там убили, племянника... За кого сложили они свои головы? За тех

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<sup>168</sup> TK, p. 44.

же насильников, которые терзают нас здесь. Что же это такое делается, я спрашиваю?!...<sup>169</sup>

One's impression is of Jews as the ultimate suffering nation in the Empire, enduring a double burden: they suffer not only what Russians suffer in war (contrary to the stereotype of Jews as shirking military service), but also as innocent victims at the hands of pogromists. Their dedication to the revolution, fuelled by centuries of persecution, is probably greater than any other nation, and brings a proportionately high amount of torment. The anxiety of the Jewish mother of radical children exceeds that of a Russian mother: she worries not only about her children dying in battle as revolutionaries, but also at the hands of pogromists. Consequently, her rage at those who persecute her children is even greater. Lea strives to bring an end to centuries of passive Jewish suffering at the hands of their persecutors. No longer does the Rachel figure passively bemoan the fate of her children: she attempts to move history and end the persecution, adopting the mantle of the prophet, usually reserved for men. Although Lea particularly emphasizes the struggle of Jews, she contributes to revolution across the Empire, engaging in battle not with pogromists but with agents of the oppressive regime that has killed her children not because they are Jews but because they are fighting for justice for all. Consequently, Lea, too, fights not only for her own (Jewish) children, but for all humankind: although Aizman's maternal figure casts a deathly shadow over the revolutionary wave, she embodies the Jewish mother's capacity for self-sacrifice not only for her children but for all.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

## 7. Conclusion

By portraying their Jewish women as epitomizing the suffering of all the oppressed classes, the authors discussed in this chapter have them transcend their ethnicity and its negative connotations such as seductiveness, exploitativeness, heterodoxy and alterity. The women's non-prioritization of their ethnic group is reinforced by their commitment to universalist principles, which seem ultimately to take precedent even in Basia's approach. However, while the Jewish heroines are beyond the confines of their nationality, they paradoxically embody it, too, drawing on the particularities of the Jewish experience and the reserves of outrage and passion it has left them and on their allegedly unique Jewish female qualities to show that Jewish women have a central role to play in the Empire-wide revolutionary movement.

Aizman and An-skii offer two versions of the young Jewish female radical that both contrast and overlap in their features. Aizman's largely fits the model of the Russian female radical martyr elaborated by Mogil'ner and Patyk, to the extent that, despite the biblical context of the work, even her Jewishness is downplayed. She does not claim to be fighting for her people; rather, she fights for all those deprived of justice. Dora is far less directly associated with the Jewish theme of the play embodied in its title than her mother. Neither narrowly Jewish nor overtly assimilated into Russian society, Dora is a universalist heroine. Through attesting to his heroine's capacity for self-sacrifice while minimizing her ethnic features, Aizman secures for young radical Jewesses a place in the radical mythology of martyrdom. Moreover, by appealing to the universality of the trope of motherhood, and by demonstrating Lea's support for the oppressed as a whole, he does the same for the Jewish mother.

Unlike Aizman, An-skii does not want to represent his heroines as saintly martyrs. Basia's primary concern is not glorious self-sacrifice for its own sake, but the achievement of justice while concentrating on representing her people and fighting for its interests. She is closer to her people than Dora, but still ultimately a universalist. An-skii portrays his heroine as possessing features, values and priorities not identified in similar radical works as typical of ethnic Russian radicals but that are not only compatible with the overall revolutionary movement but can also enhance it. Basia stands as an example of what a person at the lowest social level in the Empire can achieve, and how such people can promote the interests of others in their position. She represents the interests not only of her nation but also of a particular class within that nation. She is therefore a role model both for Jewish women and for working-class

women of all ethnicities, proving that working women can propagandize, lead and organize within the revolutionary movement, and can also adopt a valid critical attitude towards some aspects of it.

An-skii shows that Jewish women have more than self-sacrificing dedication to offer: the Jewish radical environment nurtures their leadership and organizational talents, such that they can stand as role-models for women in this arena, too, setting a precedent for female participation in politics. This represents another victory not only against the political status quo, but also against the patriarchal system with which it was aligned in the eyes of many radicals. An-skii does this through demonstrating the greater opportunities for women to engage in such activities than in the Russian radical groups. Through his heroine An-skii therefore promotes the Bund as a model to be followed in its treatment of women, albeit not in all respects. Basia embodies what An-skii presents as a Jewish attitude to violence – that of stoic resistance and self-defence, as opposed to revelling in bloodshed and honouring self-sacrifice for its own sake. This sober, dignified approach to violence can serve as an example for the Empire-wide revolutionary movement. Basia embodies the possibility and desirability of preserving what is valuable in the contemporary world, in this case Jewish identity and specificity, rather than the outright destruction of the old in the revolutionary wave. The Russian revolutionary movement as a whole can learn from this, too, given its tendency towards destructive extremes.

Ultimately, An-skii is more subversive than Aizman. Aizman follows the typical path of making his heroine into a martyr and merely fuels this myth, while expanding it by creating more privileged places for the Jewish mother and daughter within it. An-skii, however, proves that the Jewess, and the female revolutionary in general, is capable of far more than martyrdom. He gives his heroine aspirations that are genuinely her own, such as her commitment to her nation and her struggle to get her voice heard within the party. Through this, An-skii legitimizes Jewish female self-actualization and frees Jewish heroines from the need to justify their existence only through self-sacrifice. Basia possesses selfless dedication in abundance, but what makes her stand out from other Jewish heroines and makes her a more convincing character apart from her personal aspirations is the fact that she possesses faults; there is little sense of ‘terrible perfection’ looming over her in the novella. Basia is also almost unique in being a heroine whose commitment to Jewry neither manifests itself in xenophobia, nor condemns her to death.

It is through presenting Basia as possessing what one might term ‘heroic ordinariness’ that An-skii achieves something not achieved by any of the other writers in this whole thesis: the representation of a Jewess with qualities that derive only minimally from stereotypical expectations of her Jewishness and from her gender. This is particularly important given that An-skii presents Basia’s Jewishness as an important aspect of her convictions and aspirations. Critics who find female characters in pre-revolutionary literature too passive and presented in terms of their physical appearance might praise Basia’s activism and the lack of attention An-skii pays to her physical appearance. Those scholars who criticize the tendency of Russian literature to place too strong expectations on female characters to be self-sacrificing would laud An-skii’s presentation of a woman who, while self-sacrificing, is not forced to die for the cause, even though she is probably prepared to. One cannot accuse An-skii of encouraging his readers to take pleasure in his heroine’s suffering, or of reducing his heroine to a heroic victim. In this respect, Basia contrasts strongly to, say, Chirikov’s Liia (from among the Russian writers) or Aizman’s Dora (from Jewish writers). Both Iushkevich and Aizman tend to present their revolutionary Jewesses as devoted to the radical cause in a manner that spurs them to self-destructive action or self-sacrifice for its own sake. Such representations may be seen as insulting to the intelligence and self-worth of Jewish female revolutionaries, and reduce them to incarnations of self-sacrifice. An-skii, on the other hand, gives his Jewess intelligence, reason, and determination to survive and achieve her goals in life in addition to a capacity for self-sacrifice, rather than merely a rather unreflecting devotion that appears more inclined to destroy its possessor than advance revolutionary goals. Through his presentation of Basia, An-skii counters not only the myth of the revolutionary Jewess created by Iushkevich and Aizman, but also the whole sensationalist, confining cult of extraordinariness, suffering and self-sacrifice created around the image of the Jewess in Russian (and West European) culture. Although, as discussed above, it is males such as Matvei who stand out as the most fully heroic characters of the novella, unlike in much Russian literature, the female is never presented as a mere adjunct. Perhaps what makes Basia stand out the most from almost all the texts in this thesis, including Aizman’s, is the lack of clichéd emotions she arouses in the reader and the preponderance of positive reactions: not pity, fear or desire but sympathy and admiration. The absence of the religious or spiritual figuration of other Jewish women in Russian literature is relevant here, too: she does not have to prove herself through accepting or seeking death, or redeem the sins of her nation. However, she retains the positive features of the archetypal Jewess such as self-

sacrificing devotion to her nation and to humanity as a whole. While Aizman used the revolutionary context to give his Jewess a role in the Empire-wide fight for freedom, An-skii has his Jewess use the revolutionary context to free herself from the normal constraints on the Jewess of victimhood and tragedy.

## Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the wide variety of portrayals of the Jewess in pre-revolutionary Russian literature. The Jewess often attracts extremes of characterization: she is variously portrayed as an ideal version of figures as diverse as the Jew, the Russian patriot, the agent of Gentile moral downfall, and the universalist revolutionary. She is also fairly consistently depicted as more suffering, more virtuous, more amenable and yet also as ultimately more subversive and stronger than the male Jew. Whether as a preserver of Jewishness or as the ideal convert to Christianity or radicalism, the Jewess often serves as a foil to the male Jew, highlighting his degeneracy, oppressiveness and xenophobia through exhibiting the opposite of some of these qualities or through being the male Jew's victim; even the nefariousness of Vagner's demonic Jewess is relativized through her becoming a victim of her father. Although both the male Jew and the Jewess often possess inner strength and will, the Jewess in positive and negative portrayals alike is distinguished by a courageousness that contrasts with the Jew's typical cowardice. One of the contributions of this thesis to the general field of the portrayal of Jews in European literature, then, is its confirmation that the trend observed in West European literature whereby the Jewess is generally portrayed more positively than the male Jew is present also in Russian literature. However, I have also found that the Jewess is typically portrayed as more active than in West European literature, often occupying a place at the forefront of socio-political developments. Future scholarship could examine how the women of other significant minorities in the Russian Empire, such as Poles and Armenians (both of which were well-represented in revolutionary movements, for example), were depicted, and determine whether the specific myths and realities relating to the position of Jewish women in the Empire meant that they were set apart from other minorities as truly extraordinary.

In the expectation for her to live up to high standards of morality and capacity for self-sacrifice, the Jewish heroine resembles the typical Russian heroine of Russian literature. Indeed, the Jewess often embodies a kind of ideal femininity: physically beautiful, self-sacrificing and capable of devoted love. However, the Jewess in pre-revolutionary literature had fewer options than the Russian woman to be considered a heroine; she had to do more and prove herself more to achieve that status. For example, there are few instances of the common Russian trope of the fallen woman being saved

by a male and proving herself to be a Madonna figure at heart.<sup>1</sup> Instead, any signs of sexuality or of behaviour not in line with contemporary Russian morals tend to signal that the Jewess is being portrayed as a demonic woman. Any standards of behaviour that Russian heroines were made to abide by apply even more stringently to Jewish heroines. Eminent heroines such as Krestovskii's Tamara, Chirikov's Liia and Aizman's Dora ultimately choose to reject or are forced to reject romantic or sexual relationships, instead dedicating themselves to social issues. In general, the Jewess is either an angel or a demon; she is rarely anything in between. Although Russian literature is considered to apply a similar dichotomy to its portrayal of Russian women, the dichotomy is stronger still in the case of Jewish women. Chekhov's Susanna is the exception here through not falling into either category, throwing such dichotomies into doubt; An-skii's Basia, too, resists categorization. On the whole, though, the texts examined tend to demand even more displays of self-sacrifice from their Jewesses than Russian literature tends to demand from Russian heroines. Although the Jewess proves herself an exemplary member of society, she has no other choice because to a greater extent than Russian women this is the basis of her acceptance. Any slight deviations are too suspicious to be accepted. This is one of the reasons why An-skii's Basia and Ester stand out as exceptions; both of them, but especially Ester, are portrayed as heroines without the need for them to perform extravagant acts of self-sacrifice and without the need for them to renounce their Jewishness. Future research could examine whether the trend that I have observed in Russian-author works applies to minority women in Russian and other literatures as a whole, or whether there is something particular about the Jewess because of the prevalent notion that Jews need to prove that they do not possess the negative traits commonly attributed to this much-maligned group.

One of my thesis's contributions to the field of the depiction of national minorities in literature is its demonstration of how texts can criticize the majority society through female representatives of these minorities. The Russian heroine in Russian literature often exposes Russian males' weakness through her moral superiority and greater capacity to act. While some classic Jewesses of West European literature such as *Ivanhoe*'s Rebecca serve to show Gentile men's heroism, the Jewess of Russian literature almost always lacks a Russian male to 'save' her; she thus serves to condemn not only Russian society as a whole, but specifically Russian males. The typical Jewess, being not only a strong woman but also a victim both as a woman and as an outsider,

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<sup>1</sup> This theme does, however, feature in Iushkevich's works, for example, in his novel *Evrei* (1904).

may be better suited to condemn society as a whole from a variety of perspectives than the typical Russian heroine of Russian literature. Even the downtrodden heroines of many of Dostoevskii's works are arguably less impressive incarnations of victimhood than the figure of the Jewess, unable to find acceptance in the Jewish or Gentile spheres. Only the Jewish woman, not the Russian woman or the Jewish male, could at once attack all the bastions of the old regime because only she could be shown to suffer unjustly from all of them: she was viewed as subject to the most severely patriarchal society, subject to both misogyny from within and xenophobia from without. However, it should be noted that pre-revolutionary Russian writers did not tend explicitly to present the Jewess as a victim both as a Jewess and as a woman. For example, when they did present her as suffering as a result of misogyny, it was usually written off as a feature of the Jewish environment. Works tended to ignore misogyny and sexism within Gentile society.

The malleable Jewess is also better able than most Russian heroines to embody the capacity for change, a fact of particular significance in late tsarist Russia where there was a general consensus that change was needed. Reflecting the new opportunities available to Jewish women from the late nineteenth century, the Jewess in Russian literature partly was transformed from a passive, eroticized victim to an agent of protest and bold activist. She became a rebel against both Jewish and Russian society. Even when she seemed to become a victim, for example, in the case of Chirikov's Liia or Aizman's Dora, in fact her sacrifice had a powerful social message. Overall my case studies tend to conform with Slezkine's evaluation of the position of Jews in Europe in the period: 'The most successful of all modern tribes, they were also the most vulnerable.'<sup>2</sup> Although the Jewess is idealized as able to strive courageously for socio-political change, she also serves to demonstrate the enormous obstacles to it through her often tragic fate.

While in the traditional Western tale of the Jewess, she stood as the virtuous and spiritual foil to her oppressive and materialistic father, and often served to highlight – albeit critically and only in certain respects – the superiority of the Christian, Gentile world, in Russian literature the Jewess is often all-condemning. The intolerance and other faults of Russian Gentile society are subject to as much, if not more, condemnation, as Jewish faults. This tends to apply even when the text is antisemitic, where instead of criticism of Russian lack of tolerance one typically has criticism of Russian liberalism and weakness through excessive tolerance. It is not only the Jewess

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<sup>2</sup> Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), p. 1.

and Jews in general who have to reform and undergo various forms of conversion, but also the Gentile society in which they find themselves. Unlike in English literature, the Jewess is rarely shown gaining full acceptance by society. She remains in almost all works an eroticized, exoticized victim, although this thesis has shown that texts differ widely with regard to the extent to which they show her to overcome this status and the extent to which they ‘other’ the Jewess; texts often problematize the notion of the Jewess’s otherness by drawing attention to the fact that it partly derives from Russians’ perception as well as constituting something inherent to the Jewess herself.

One would expect that the Jewess, being not only of the opposite sex to most of the Russian authors whom I have studied but also belonging to the nation typically conceived as the Russians’ ultimate ‘Other’, would be maximally alien to the Russian characters whom the authors depict. Yet what is often brought to the fore is not the Jewess’s difference from the Russian male but her superiority to him and her embodiment either of an ideal self or of those aspects shared by all humanity that the Russian wishes to disown. Through problematizing the notion of Jewish ‘otherness’, the Jewess subverts all but the most extreme antisemitic ideologies within Russian literature, serving as a means for writers such as Krestovskii and Vagner to realize their positive sentiments and beliefs about Jews, or to realize their conviction that there are exceptions to Jewish nefariousness. My analysis of Kryzhanovskaia’s *Mertvaia petlia* suggests that in works promoting extreme forms of antisemitism gender differences among Jews tend to recede. However, Krestovskii’s *Zhid idet*, which also bears an antisemitic ideology, albeit one that is far more problematic than Kryzhanovskaia’s, has a Jewess as its heroine and most positive character. This suggests that, where there is any ambiguity within a text with regard to its antisemitic tendencies, the Jewess can function as the optimum means to explore and test these doubts. More research needs to be conducted on the relationship between antisemitism and gender in literature in order further to examine the implications of my findings on the basis of a wider range of texts and literary traditions.

My thesis adds to our understanding of Russian national identity in pre-revolutionary Russian literature by showing how in works portraying Jewish women it can be subject to great questioning and criticism. On the one hand, a type of outsider that would appear to be totally incompatible with a Russian identity can be flexible enough to adopt one. On the other hand, Russians themselves are often portrayed as too weak or too intolerant to accept them or give them the support that they need.

A further contribution that my thesis makes to our understanding of Russian national identity is the finding that an outsider can embody it. The Jewess can embody the dividedness that plagued Russia and Russians in the late tsarist period, as well as the hope of redemption for the whole Russian Empire: the overcoming of national prejudices; women's escape from the shackles of patriarchy; the rising of the downtrodden to control over their fate and that of their country. She can appeal to Russian writers of all political persuasions through embodying victimhood, which in much Russian literature almost guaranteed the sympathy and even exaltation of writers and readers, and to which writers from the entire political spectrum appealed. In the multi-national empire she also offers the hope that national identity can be preserved without a descent into xenophobia. Typically neither aggressively nationalistic nor prepared to treacherously 'sell off' her Jewish identity like many male Jews, she can act as a model for both Jewish and any other national identity, but also for a citizen of a multi-national state. It is the Jewess's ability to attach herself so passionately either to her nation or to the Russian nation that reveals her capacity to become the ideal inhabitant of the Russian Empire, fiercely loyal to and willing to sacrifice herself for the people of her country of residence, regardless of their ethnic origin, should she be shown love and support.<sup>3</sup> It is this quality that makes Chirikov's Liia such a tragic character: able to embrace all nations, she is forced by others' prejudice into limiting her actions to standing up for her own. The Jewess is simultaneously the preserver of distinctiveness and the promoter of universalism in an era when both national identity and concepts of brotherhood were cherished.<sup>4</sup> The perceived greater openness to conversion and other forms of change of the Jewess than the male Jew and her resultant universalism allow Russian writers to appropriate aspects of the Jewess and Jewishness into Russian culture and national identity. Through the Jewess far more readily than through the male Jew, Russian writers are able to appropriate the discourse of Jewish eternal suffering, including its hope of eventual salvation. The Jewess comes to encapsulate some writers' simultaneous hopes for universal brotherhood, embodied in the aspirations of the Jewess, and their fears that human prejudice and tribal loyalties doom such aspirations to failure. The preservation of the Jewess's national identity without her losing her love for people of other nations provides Russians with the hope that their fragile and far younger national identity can survive the tumult of changes.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Valman's comment on Scott's *Rebecca*: 'Her unquestioning loyalty to her people suggests the kind of intense patriotic feeling yet to grace the newly created "English" nation.' Valman, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> On the perceived links between Jews, socialism and messianism, see Slezkine, p. 91.

The composite identity of the Jewess echoes that of the Russian as conceived by many Russian writers and thinkers. If the Russian is a unique blend of East and West, so the Russian Jewess may be a unique mix of the Jewish and the Russian-Christian.

Within the larger field of the representation of national minorities in literature as a whole, my thesis reinforces the observation that such portrayals are constructions that often reflect the fact that their creators are at least as concerned with exploring aspects of their own nation's identity and concerns as with those of the minority group itself. On the other hand, my analysis of An-skii's novella demonstrates the capacity of authors from a minority group writing within the literature of the majority to create characters largely unaffected by stereotypes prevailing within the dominant culture. Krestovskii and An-skii show the capacity of Russian literature to give a voice to a doubly marginalized group. In the works by these two writers of vastly different ideological views the plots largely belong to the Jewish heroines.

In order to give the texts that I examined the attention that they deserved, my thesis has focused on a relatively short period. Many works from outside this period need more scholarly attention in order for us to obtain a better understanding of the range of representations of the Jewess in pre-revolutionary Russian literature. This could extend to a study of the image of the Jewess in poetry and of representations of biblical Jewish women. Many of the authors I have examined have been ignored by scholarship; further research on them and their works would allow one better to judge the position of their Jewish female characters in relation to other characters and character types. Finally, more scholarship is needed on the portrayal of Jewish women in works by Jewish authors writing in Russian. Such studies can build on my study of Iushkevich, Aizman and An-skii to provide further insight into how Jewish writers reproduce and challenge stereotypes from the Russian socio-cultural sphere, as well as engage with preconceptions from within Jewish society and culture.

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